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ARIZONA JACK; or, GIANT GEORGE'S TENDER-FOOT PARD.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM"—Major Sam S. Hall,

AUTHOR OF "OLD ROCKY'S BOYEES," "GIANT GEORGE," ETC., ETC.



"HYER WE AIR ON A CYCLONE STAMPEDE, AND SARDINE-BOX CITY ARE TO BE RUN BY CHAIN LIGHTNIN'!"

Arizona Jack;*

OR,

Giant George's Tender-foot Pard.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM,"

(Maj. Sam S. Hall.)

AUTHOR OF "OLD ROCKY'S BOYEES," "GIANT GEORGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A SARDINE BOX.

"WAKE up, Hank! Ther hearse'll be 'long in 'bout a hour, an' I hopes we'uns'll git some-thin' lively in ther way o' news, er a few fresh prospecturs."

"I ain't a-sleepin', Tom Jones, an' I wish yer'd let me alone. I'm a-ruminatin'."

"That's jist how I put hit up, Hank. Yer hes a look es ef yer hed *rum*-inated. Howsomever, I hain't see'd yer errigate sence I struck ther 'Nugget.'"

"Yer doesn't 'zactly ketch on ter my 'Nited States. Yer doesn't undercomstumble ter my lingo, though hit's es plain es ther wart on Marm Holbrook's nose. Reckon yer never war run through an edication factory. Ther idee what I 'tended ter give yer war that I war medertatin'."

"What?"

"Now, yer better not pvoke me, Tom; 'cos I'm most cussedly out o' sorts. Ef I hes gut ter pick out all ther chicken-feed words in ther dictionary, hash 'em up, an' sling 'em at yer in a gentle, dove-like, cooin' kinder way, jest es though I hed bin raised on sweet-ile an' buffler marrer—ef I hes gut ter spell every dog-goned word what's gut more'n four letters inter hit, I mought es well give hit up now."

"Hank, what did yer drink last?"

"Straight whisk'; an' I'm a-talkin' straight."

"Hit 'pears ter me, Hank, that yer a leetle off yer reg'lar trail o' chin-music, an' hit kinder indercates mixed lightnin' permisc'us bev' ridges."

"Now, jes' look a-hyer, Tom; I tole yer I was feelin' es though I hed swallered a hull box o' blue-mass pills, er I indercated—that's whar I've corralled one o' yer big words—I indercated by my lingo that I war feelin' 'bout that a-way; an' ef yer rile me much more, I'll gi'n yer a good cause ter think I've used mixed drinks, by a-mixin' yer up so dang'd suddint like with Sardine-box dirt that yer won't be able ter crawl inter ther Nugget an' nomernate yer p'ison fer half a moon—I'll now perced ter 'spain'; I war ruminatin' er medertatin'—yer kin pick whichever word yer want—'bout ther lively times what's past an' gone. Sardine-box City air bu'sted, dead sure an' sartin, an' I'm dang'd ef I wouldn't be plum full o' glad ter hev ther Panthers back ag'in, jes' ter make things a leetle lively."

"That's what's settin' bad on yer stum-jacket, air hit? Things does glide almighty smooth, Hank. Tew much civerlize war shoved inter this burg ter onc't, an' hit couldn't stan' ther press. Giant George orter lef' a few Panthers ter hustle us roun', an' rub ther rust off onc't in a while. 'Sides that, I hes bin sot back by hevin' sich cussed luck at ther Slip-up. Hit war a dog-goned unappropriate handler ter give ther mine fust off, an' I bucked ag'in' hit, but ther piigrims what fust staked her off chris'en'd her 'Slip up' out o' pure devilmint, 'cos they hed bin lef' out in ther cold. Howsomever, that's dust that, ef we'uns hed ther mersheenery ter chaw up ther quartz."

"Thar yer go ag'in, 'bout yer dang'd ole pile o' rock! Hit sickens me ter listen at yer."

As Hank made this last remark, he contorted his most comical face and shot a squirt of tobacco-juice toward the middle of the street, adding:

"Tom Jones, I'll set 'em up, jes' ter change yer idees. I hes know'd fer a half-hour that yer hes bin loafin' roun' hyer jes' ter lubercate yer in'ards!"

With these words Hank arose, in a wavering, shaky manner, his features showing regretful thoughts, while Tom Jones followed the proprietor of the Nugget Hotel into the bar, a look of triumph in his eyes.

The reader who has perused the story of "Giant George; or, the Angel o' Penarlayno Range," will at once recognize the two characters, who figure there so prominently, and whose conversation has been given as a commencement to this narrative.

* Arizona Jack (Jack Burke) is to-day a famous character upon the Western Plains.

However, for the benefit of others, a few general explanations will be necessary before proceeding further.

Sardine-box City was a mining town of Arizona, situated at a point not far removed from the confluence of the San Carlos and Gila rivers, and directly at the base, or in the midst of canyons, gulches and foot-hills of the Pinaleno Range. The so-called "city" consisted of two lines or rows of slab shanties, which fronted toward each other, and extended north and south on either side of a wide street, which was innocent of pavement, plank walk, or even the usual care of a country road in the "States."

Unlike the City of the Cæsars, the town had the appearance of having been "built in a day," having been settled during the excitement of what was considered a "big find" in the quartz line.

Gold had also been discovered in the deep gulches, at points where there were, however, small advantages for "wash," which fact had drawn some few of the most impecunious of miners, who could "pan the dust" at small cost when there was water to be had.

Nugget Hotel was the most extensive public house in the burg, Marm Holbrook being the landlady; and it boasted of two rooms over the bar, with a glass window illuminating each. In one of these rooms that worthy lady was in the habit of proudly pointing to a bed on which had slept Miss Lena Lawrence, the "Angel o' the Penarlayno Range," who had come from St. Louis to find the grave of her murdered brother, in Dead Man's Gulch, and avenge his death; which, with the aid of Giant George and the "citz," she had succeeded in doing most thoroughly.

It was the same time that Hank and Tom Jones were conversing, as just recorded, at the front door of the "Nugget," that Marm Holbrook, as was often the case, was engaged in relating to a recently-arrived stranger the history of her best room, and its connection with the "cleaning out" of the bandits known as the "Panthers."

The stranger in whom Marm Holbrook had taken such an interest had arrived the previous day, mounted upon a fine horse, with extra and somewhat fresh equipments, and had at once put up at the "Nugget," the landlady assigning him the up-stairs back chamber, which was in fact the only extra sleeping apartment in the house, except the front, and exclusive, best room, so noted in the annals of Sardine-Lox City. The new arrival had not attracted, to any great extent, the attention of Hank and Tom, as he was put down by them from the first as a soft "tender-foot," or "fresh."

He failed to patronize the bar, and kept himself in the kitchen, chatting with Marm Holbrook, and "pumping" her extensively in regard to frontier life, and matters pertaining thereto, which pleased the good dame, who promised to show him the best room, and relate the history of the honored personage who had occupied it some three months previous.

He had registered his name—the register was a medical almanac with alternate blank pages—as "John Burke, Wilmington, Delaware," and had informed Mrs. Holbrook that he had come to the conclusion of designating himself, in frontier style, "Arizona Jack." He was "got up" in good shape, wearing a wide-brimmed sombrero, a blue woolen shirt, with wide flowing collar and bosom richly embroidered. His breeches were of buckskin, fringed, and thrust into high-topped boots, the legs of which were stamped and embossed, while upon the heels were a pair of silver spurs. He carried a bowie knife and a pair of richly ornamented Colt's revolvers, the belt which supported these weapons having a large silver clasp, on which was engraved, "Arizona Jack," and the legend "Whoop her through or Bust." Altogether the new-comer was a fine appearing, graceful looking young man.

"I tell yer," explained Marm Holbrook to Jack, "she war es purty a angel es ever struck Arizone, an' when she war hyer I forgot all 'bout goin' back Texas-way, an' 'lowed Hank ter 'run 'roun' loose permisc'us like. Me an' her 'greed on hit that she should be cog'd Dora Deane, ter bamboozle ther city, an' Dick Deane arter she put on men's togs. She hed ther neatest buckskin suit I ever see'd, an' ther day she 'roved Sardine-box City run wild. Ther Panthers come in ther same night on a rampage an' shootin' an' hangin' war ther game. Giant George, he 'roved in disguise, with his burro, Don Diablo, and run through ther burg. Ther city war goin' ter hang him, when ther Angel reckernized him from ther winder es a pard o' her brother's, Sam Lawrence. Ther citz

wilted 'bout then, an' next thing ther Panthers come on a cyclone stompede, an' when ther circus war open she levanted with Giant George ter find her brother's grave, an' gut tuck. They gobbled her while she war cryin' over hit, an' George war a leetle ways off, fixin' ter camp. Yer see, El Capitan, ther boss o' ther Panthers, war ther devil what shot Sam Lawrence. Jist take a sot down on ther bed, fer I knows I'm teju's, but hit's es good es a New York Sat'day Journal story, though I hain't see'd a span new one o' them blessed papers sence I war squatted back Texas-way. But ter perceed. Giant George he skuted arter ther Angel, an' knowin' ther locate, drapped in on 'em, fust sendin' a young cow-boy, cog'd Terrif, back ter tell ther citz ter glide up ther range ready fer biz.

"They cleaned out ther hull Panther crowd, an' tuck a heap o' plunder, savin' ther Angel by a scratch, an' dang'd—scuse me fer sw'arin', which I seldom does fer I'm a meetin'-house woman—if thar didn't come ther young gent from back States-way what war 'gaged ter hitch harness with Miss Lena. He hed bin' on her trail though he hedn't see'd her fer years, hevin' bin parted frem her by ther Panther boss, 'fore ther cuss turned road-agent.

"His cog war Rudolph Reynolds. Ther boss o' ther Panthers was called El Capitan hyer, but his handle, States-way, war Edward Wiloughby. Waal, Reynolds come in an' tuck a hand in ther heftiest shootin' an' slashin'. Arter they all gut back ter ther burg, we'uns hed a he ole picnic, an' ther Angel war hitched ter Reynolds. Ther hull burg gut drunk, an' Giant George an' his burro levanted back, States-way, wi' Mr. an' Mrs. Reynolds. I tell yer, all Sardine-box City put on mou'nin' an' gut plum full o' bug-juice, an' Hank—that's my ole man—gut thin in meat, not eatin' enough ter choke a hummin'-bird. Ther Angel, an' her man, an' George, an' Don Diablo, ther burro, lef' this burg three months ago, an' ther hain't bin a day since then what I hain't pestered Hank 'bout blind ter levant back Texas-way, fer Sardine-box City hevn't bin wo'th shucks. Biz war blocked, an' ther burg bu'sted.

"Ya-as, them's ther very bed clo's, pillars an' all, what war slep' on by ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range; an' Nugget Hotel wouldn't hold me an hour ef I didn't lev a show ter come up-sta'rs an' gaze at hit. An' Tom Jones an' Hank, 'spesh'ly when they gits b'ilin' over wi' p'ison, comes up hyer, an' sots down an' erics like a couple o' sufferin' sinners what hed jest gut a glimpse o' salvation, an' knows they can't chamber enough ter sen' em safe ter glory."

Marm Holbrook was a short, motherly woman, with fat, rosy face, and the exact height and build of Hank, her husband. She dressed her hair in the old style of drooping plaits that covered her small ears and was drawn up behind without ornament.

Smoothing her apron, and at times her front hair, as she related the history of her honored guest chamber, Marm Holbrook was a pleasant enough picture to look upon.

Heaving a deep sigh, she advanced to the window, and pointing sadly toward the canyon, continued:

"Thar air whar they war 'bout ter string up Giant George, an' whar they did s'pend two o' ther spies o' El Capitan; an' jist below air ther big canyon whar ther citz went ter pass ther night ther Angel fust 'roved, 'cos they didn't keer ter disturb her. They all gut chuck full o' whisk', an' Hank war arterward laid out on ther boulder by ther boys, jist out o' pure devilmint. Yer see thar war two o' ther Panthers hung right over him, an' he war dead drunk. When he woke up he thought he war in Tophit, er leastways he didn't know whar he war. He didn't even know hisself, an' a big black wolf, drawed by ther scent, sprung up at ther corpses, an' hit fell onto Hank, an' skeered 'bout all ther red outen his face. Then the Panthers rid up, all in black masks, an' on black horses, an' Hank done ther tallest runnin' back bum, fer he see'd then who he war, an' whar he war. He wa'n't wo'th a ole dish-rag arter he struck ther Nugget, an' skeered me some yer kin bet when he fell in a dead faint inter our bedroom.

"Howsomever, I gut down ther shot-gun, an'—here Marm Holbrook left the window and walked toward the door of the back room, making believe, as she did so, to wipe the perspiration from her forehead with her apron—"I'm e'na'most 'shamed ter tell yer, though folkses say I orter be proud o' hit, I grabbed ther gun an' rushed out o' doors in my night-gown, ter ther corner o' ther Nugget, an' jist plugged one o' ther Panthers, layin' him out cold

meat in ther street, arter they hed shot some o' ther citz.

"Ya-as, stranger, that's ther hull biz, an' Arizone war struck clean through arter ther news gut out that ther citz o' this burg hed wiped out El Capitan's hull band o' Panthers. We thought hit would draw a heap o' pilgrims hyer, an' hit did; but they didn't linger, nor leave much dust ter count on. An' yer kin sot hit down, ef somethin' doesn't turn up speedy ther shanties'll be left fer the gov'ment mule-whackers ter fry thar bacon with. Come on; I must watch Hank, fer he war mighty nigh on ter havin' a hull menagery in his boots last night."

Marm Holbrook, however, had not gotten half-way down the stairs, when most unearthly yells and smashing of glass resounded from the bar, followed by shrieks and howls. She screamed out:

"Bless my soul, Hank's gut 'em bad! Didn't I jes' tell yer so, Jack?"

As the worthy landlady thus cried out, she threw up her hands, lost her balance, and falling upon her alarmed visitor, they both rolled in a heap to the bottom of the stairway, Marm Holbrook screaming, in mingled shame and terror, at being "mixed up" in a "roll down" with a strange man.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE GUEST.

HANK HOLBROOK and Tom Jones entered the bar of the Nugget, and the former walked slowly, and with somewhat uncertain step, around to the opposite side of the plank, Tom watching his movements with something of anxiety.

Hank's little eyes rolled and his facial nerves began to twitch, as he placed his elbows upon the counter without giving any further sign of "settin' em up."

"Thought yer war goin' ter sot out p'ison, Hank. Is yer goin' ter be sick? Dang'd ef yer don't look es bad es yer did when ther boys laid yer out on ther bowlder."

These remarks of Tom were ill-timed, for Hank suddenly braced up and brought down one of his small red fists upon the slab with a slam, as he exclaimed:

"Dog-gone yer, Sheriff Jones, I believe I won't sling a drop at yer! Thet war a nasty trick ter play on a dog, an' yer hed a hand in hit yerself."

"Hain't yer made me shove 'dust' enough ter let that pass, ole pard? Yer'd a' done the same job for me. I war ag'in' the thing from ther start, es ther boyees tole yer."

This seemed to pacify Hank, and his anger soon subsided. Looking around with a mysterious air, as if to satisfy himself that there was no one else present, while his face and eyes expressed superstitious wonder, he asked:

"Tom, did yer see a herd o' black wolves passin' down ther street jist afore yer struck ther 'Nugget,' nex' ther door whar I war a-settin'?"

The look of mirth in Tom's eyes changed to one of deep concern, as he studied the face of the landlord.

"Thar ain't a black wolf, I'm a-bettin', within ten mile o' this burg, Hank; an' I bain't see'd one nigh hyer since ther animile yer slung inter ther canyon three moons ago. Ef yer bain't got ther horrors comin' on, I'll sw'ar hit's a sign o' heavy biz in ther burg soon!"

The sheriff felt confident that Hank was on the verge of mania, but these last and cheering words, which came suddenly into his mind, would, he knew, cheer the landlord up, and keep off the impending fit of jimmies.

He was not deceived, for Hank's face brightened at once, and he proceeded to set out a bottle and two glasses.

"Pour out a good stiff horn fer yerself fust, Hank, an' suck hit down quick, while I gaze out on the street, an' see ef I kin git a peep at them wolves o' yourn—"

Tom was anxious to get a drink down the throat of the landlord, and knowing the latter to be extravagantly polite in his cups, always insisting upon his guest filling up first, he advanced to the door, and to humor the man, professed to be looking out for the wolves. But probably no man was ever filled with more exceeding great joy, than was Tom Jones when he reached the door.

Hearing the rattle of the wheels of the coming stage, which had slipped his mind, in his concern 't Hank's condition, Tom glanced quickly up the street toward the break in the range, where the rough road led down a rocky declivity to Sardine-box City, and no sooner did he see the heavy coach with its eight gallop-

ing steeds, than he dashed out into the street, and stood shading his eyes with his hand.

It was only for an instant. Then, with loud yells, he sprung high in the air, rushed back into the bar, kicked a dozen tumblers from the counter, and landed upon poor Hank Holbrook, both rolling in a fierce struggle upon the floor. Tom was unable to speak a word in the intense enjoyment of the situation. Hank, as the reader knows, was overdoesed with his own merchandise, but had sufficient sense left to reason a little. He had just gulped down about four fingers of whisky, as advised, and was striving to retain the same on his stomach, by bending his thoughts on other matters, and chiefly by gazing at a favorite picture, which he had lately secured, and tacked up as something very ornamental. It was a colored cut, issued by BEADLE AND ADAMS of New York, to illustrate their "Library" publications, and was beautiful as a choice chromo in the eyes of the denizens of Sardine-box City. Unfortunately, however, there was a cut of a trapper with a fur cap on his head, the tail of the animal hanging down behind, which brought the wolves forcibly to the mind of poor Hank. No sooner, therefore, did he hear the wild yells of Tom, than all the old imaginings became a reality; and, when his pard made that wild leap into the bar, crashing the glasses, he felt instinctively that all the terrible wolves were upon him, and as he fell over in the collision, he crawled under the bar in a frenzy of terror, trembling in every limb.

Tom, at length, burst into roars of laughter, still unable to speak, and grabbed Hank by the legs to jerk him out. A backward glance disclosing no wolves, the poor fellow began to think that his comrade had gone mad.

This was worse, if possible. The belief, too, was made something of a reality, when he was drawn quickly out from among his decanters by the heels, and then swung over the shoulders of his strong wiry pard, who ran wildly out into the street, with Hank head downward and unable to help himself in the least.

The shrieks of Hank, mingled with the piercing laughter of Tom, created an uproar that brought the "citz" from all directions, and caused Marm Holbrook to tumble down stairs upon the stranger she had been kindly entertaining with her narrative of the one grand historical event of Sardine-box City.

To the great astonishment of all who rushed from their shanties, they saw a sight so novel in the streets of their, of late, so quiet burg, that they joined in with roars of laughter, and yells of mad gratification.

The first came as they saw the sheriff dashing up the street with one of Hank Holbrook's feet held fast over each shoulder, his head down and his arms flying wildly, while his features were convulsed with terror and red from his frequent potations; terrified yells rung from his lips, as he thought pandemonium was let loose, and his final doom had come.

The sound of the approaching heavy coach now led all the "citz" to cast glances up the mountain trail, and then such cheers rent the air as had not been heard in Sardine-box City for three long months.

The "hearse" was swaying from side to side in a dangerous way for a "tender-foot" to witness, the horses galloping like mad down the steep rocky trail, the driver holding slack lines and cutting the air with his long whip. But this was a sight that was often witnessed when Sam Scott held the ribbons, and was full of liquor, and of itself could create but little stir.

That which caused the united mass of "citz" to turn into such a hilarious mob and had caused Tom Jones to yell like an Apache, and act like an escaped lunatic generally, was still another sight.

On the top of the coach, standing upright, but bending his limbs to suit the roll of the "hearse," was the unmistakable Giant George, his identity being made a sure thing, even in the distance, from the fact that his inseparable pard, Don Diablo, the long-eared and diminutive burro, was standing between his master's legs on the coach top.

When Don Diablo left the burg, three months before, he was in the hind boot of the "hearse," he now occupied a more exalted position, and put on a much prouder air, for had he not been to the "States," and with the "Angel o' Penarlayno Range," at that?

Giant George had evidently gotten his new buckskin leggings, blue shirt, and sombrero, into a presentable state for entering Arizona in a style suitable to his character, by rolling in Colorado mud, kicking around, and cutting holes in his outfit with his bowie. The huge

knife occupied its usual position when its owner was on a jamboree; i. e., thrust through his hair over his ear upward, and projecting from his sombrero.

The burly scout was to all appearances "fixed," as a pair of army "Colt's sixes" were plainly to be seen in his belt, which, as well as the scabbards, were highly ornamented in gold bullion filagree work, the clasps of the belt and the butts of the weapons being also a solid mass of gold. The clasp was a huge square one, and in large letters engraved upon the same was the legend which he bore proudly:

"GIANT GEORGE,

ARIZONA.

"From 'The Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range.'"

The giant scout was also evidently well "fixed" for meeting his old pards in the regular way; in other words, he was about half-full of his favorite "terrantaler juice."

Tom Jones, with Hank more than half dead, cleared the street, and met the coach at the foot of the decline, when, as Giant George saw and recognized the men, and tumbled to Tom's racket, he gave a ringing war-whoop, reached down and forward, clutched the reins from Sam's hands, and with one fierce, steady pull, brought the team up standing, just as Tom, panting with exertion, reached the side of the coach. Then, leaning over, the burly scout grasped one of the hapless Hank's ankles, and drew the landlord of the "Nugget Hotel" up by his side.

In an instant after, Tom Jones too was on the top of the "hearse," grasping his old pard by the hand. Hank, more dead than alive, was set astride of Don Diablo; and Tom, standing by the side of Giant George, who kept his old position, supporting Hank and Tom, while he yelled in thunder tones to the driver, Sam Scott, who was rather more than half asleep:

"Whoop her up, Sam! Whoop her up! Hyer comes ther Bald-headed Eagle o' the Rockies! Hyer comes ther King-pin Kioway-killer! Hyer comes Don Diablo an' his pards, Tom Jones an' Hank Holbrook! Set 'em up all 'roun'!"

With the horses again at a full run, and the above yells filling the air, the "hearse" entered the town; Hank, coming to himself at the sound of his old pard's voice and expressions, joining feebly in the general uproar, while his little eyes strove in vain to assume their old-time brilliancy.

"Rah for ther Ang'l o' Penarlayno Range!"

The "citz," who had by this time screamed themselves hoarse, fairly knocked each other down, hugged, wrestled, rolled in the dirt, and amused themselves in other like rational ways, while Giant George, as he dashed up to the station, shouted out:

"Hyer we air on a cyclone stampede, and Sardine-box City are to be run by chain lightnin'!"

As he said this he jerked out his six shooters, one in each hand, and fired a rattling fusilade, which brought at least a hundred returns from the "citz," awakening the echoes of the range; and even Marm Holbrook, as she saw and recognized the outfit and racket, ran for her famous shot-gun, and blazed away from the front door of the "Nugget," then threw down the gun under the very hoofs of the horses, as the "hearse" thundered up to the hotel, while the stranger, Arizona Jack, whom she had so unmercifully knocked down-stairs, ran like a frightened buck, and jumped at the risk of his life down an old dark shaft at the rear of the "Nugget," evidently preferring to die alone, than in such a crowd.

CHAPTER III.

NOT SO FRESH.

To describe the mob-like enthusiasm that greeted the arrival of the coach at the Nugget Hotel would be next to impossible. In a moment the horses were unhitched, and before any one was able to alight, the "hearse" went flying down the street, drawn by the "citz," at a rapid speed toward the canyon, Marm Holbrook having been hustled inside much against her will.

The sun sunk like a ball of red gold in the west, gilding the rough, bold rock peaks of Pinaleno Range, but leaving the canyons, chasms and wash-outs lying like black serpents along its foot; leaving the thickets of pine, as one gazed westward, dark patches on the landscape, suggesting to any stranger who might have been present at the time, lurking retreats of bandit, desperado or hostile Indian; but as to the "citz," as everything had been so quiet since the cleaning out of El Capitan's band of

"Panthers," not a thought of the presence of a foe within a hundred miles entered their minds.

Down rattled the "hearse," with its load of peculiar humans, drawn by a mob as peculiar and as strangely attired as themselves, down amid the rocks and clumps of cacti and stunted cedars, leaving the road, and eventually, as if by common consent, coming to a halt at the large mesquite tree, the branches of which overhung the boulder, where the same people, with some few exceptions, three months previously, had rushed with the man they were now so desirous of honoring, and welcoming like a king, to an ignominious death.

Strangely, and in disguise, had he come among them then, and for a time seemed to have subdued the "citz" by force, and to be running Sardine-box City; but the tables had been turned, and the "citz" were very near running him—up a limb. But it was a most singular scene now. The lights and shadows the same, the aspect of the landscape the same as when Giant George had been dragged to the mesquite tree to meet his doom.

The coach, with its still undelivered mail, and peculiar passengers, came to a halt in this lone spot which the hand of man had never marred or striven to beautify. Rough-hewn from the hand of Nature, whose wildest work it was, and solemnly grand under the softening light of eventide, a faint sunburst of vermillion in the far west, blending with the blue that it self mingled with, and was lost in the blackness of the zenith, serving to render, as the tree and boulder were to the west of them, the outlines of the view most impressive, especially to those who had been concerned in the tragic scenes enacted at the same spot some three months previous. On that mesquite had swayed the ghastly corpses of Black Ben and Sport, the spies of the Panthers, and just beneath them poor Hank Holbrook had experienced all the terror that man could know on earth, and live. As the coach halted, every human being in the motley crowd ceased his wild yells, and as deathly a silence reigned there as did previous to their boisterous arrival. For a full minnute this silence prevailed, and then the "citz," every man, swung his sombrero in the air, as Tom Jones cried:

"Three cheers for Giant George, the Bald-headed Eagle o' the Rockies!"

And three cheers they were. Three heartfelt cheers, from throats that fed lungs with mountain air, rung and echoed through crag, cleft and canyon; while, close following, there broke on the air from Hank:

"Rah fer the Ang'l o' Penarlayno Range!"

"Dog my cats! An' dang my perrarer promenadin' pictur', Hank!" exclaimed Giant George; "yer hain't forgot the Ang'l, has yer? An' she is an ang'l what ain't ter be fergut by ary one o' us. I loves her a heap, but neither me nor Don Diablo c'u'dn't stay in civerlize fer all the angels in Paradise. Boyees, Mrs. Lena Reynolds sent her bestest 'gards, love an' fections ter all the 'citz' o' Sardine-box City, an' she air a-goin' ter sen' a quartz mill ter chaw up the hull range, an' make us all millionaires, not crowdin' out Marm Holbrook!"

A perfect storm of cheers followed this most welcome announcement, after which the worthy sheriff again called out in his loudest tones:

"Whoop her up, citz! We're all dry, an' Hank air fainted inter his boots, what's purty dang'd full o' snakes; but he's afeerd ef he stays onzen his cowhides thew wolves'll chaw his nose an' ears off."

This personal effusion in regard to poor Hank who had sunk down under Don Diablo's feet, and was now clinging for dear life to the burro's fore legs, gave birth to a perfect storm of laughter on all sides.

Marm Holbrook crouched in the coach in fear and trembling. She had expected the wild mob to run the vehicle into the big canyon in their extravagant exuberance, and thus put an end forever to all the "citz" of Sardine-box; besides the "Nugget" was, for the first time since it had been "slapped up," vacant, unguarded, and with her precious best room, with its much prized bed, at the mercy of any straggling bummer from the mines, who might have slept a drunken sleep during the excitement, but awoke in time enough to "clean" things out at the hotel.

Not only this, but she thought of the stranger and wondered where he had levanted so suddenly. She had prayed many a time that Giant George might return and shake up the town, but she had been far from wishing herself to be so closely connected with the shaking up.

"Whoop her up!" yelled the giant scout as the old coach was at last pointed on the return

course. "Whoop her up! Eagles o' the Rockies, whoop fer yer bald-headed boss an' Don Diablo, the king burro!"

As he thus yelled, he stooped and embraced his dumb-brute pard, folding his strong arms about the animal's neck, and rubbing his cheek against Don Diablo; but the Jack had, by this time, enough of unnatural travel and jamboree business, and for some time had been standing with his eyes closed, and his huge ears dangling downward as if hung on hinges, and he simply nodded once in response to his master's caress, as the coach returned slowly in the darkness up the rocky grade.

"I'm dog goned afeard, George, that we're goin' ter lose pard Hank," said Tom Jones, rather sadly.

"He's tougher'n a ten year ole buffler bull's mop-skin," asserted the giant scout of Arizona, as he felt of Hank's head. "Ef he'd ever bin goin' ter die, hit would 'a' bin when he war left chin-up with p'isen on the boulder thet night, with a black wolf ter kiss him, a dead man on top o' him, an' another hangin' on the mesquite. I thinks ef I hed 'a' bin fixed thet way, I'd 'a' dusted over the divide myself."

As he said this, the coach stopped suddenly, and again yells broke from the "citz"—yells of consternation, and well they might be; for bright flames shot up in the darkness far up the trail ahead of them.

"Git, pards! Git!" called out Giant George, as he jumped to the earth. "The blasted hell-yuns hes set Sardine-box City afire!"

Every man drew his weapon and sprung through the darkness toward the town, but a couple of thousand yards distant, leaving the "hearse" standing. And it was now more appropriately so named than ever before, for Hank Holbrook lay senseless upon the top of the stage, and Marm Holbrook had fainted dead away as soon as she saw the flames near her home.

With set teeth and bated breath, with hands tightly clutched about their revolvers, and led by Giant George, these tough, desperate men of Arizona sprung toward their shanties, which were as dear to them as palaces to princes, all with their eyes fixed upon the flashing flames, which, in the gloom of night, appeared more appalling. They soon reached the foot, or south end of the street, and then discovered to their joy and relief, that but two of the shanties were burning, and that there was some distance between them and the others.

The long street was plainly revealed to view, but it was silent and empty. Not a living soul was within the scope of vision. This was not strange, as all had gone with the stage, except Sam Scott, the driver, who had taken charge of the horses when they were let loose; and besides him, there might possibly have been a few bummers and teamsters who lived in huts among the boulders. There were three or four women, however, who were smart enough to bolt and bar safely in the absence of the men from the town. The fire was a mystery, but a mystery soon to be solved; for, as the crowd of "citz" reached the street at a point opposite to the flames, a sight met their view that filled them with amazement and horror.

On the side of the first shanty next the fire, was a shape, a human form in a crucified position, except that it was placed feet uppermost.

But the strangest thing outside of the way in which this human form had been fixed—for it was without doubt that of a human being—and that which immediately struck the horrified observers, some perhaps with dread, was the fact that it was spotless white, the color of the driven snow.

Every man, even Giant George, halted; and before they had recovered their senses, there came a yell from across the street apparently from the bar-room door of the "Nugget," which was wide open.

All gazed in increased astonishment, for in the doorway stood Arizona Jack, although none knew him as such; Tom Jones alone seeming to recognize him as the stranger who had been a few times in Hank's bar while he was present.

As he now appeared, he was covered with dust and blood; his clothing was torn in many places, his forehead was bleeding, his hat gone, and his long hair in wild disarray. But he was evidently not discouraged, for he held a bottle of whisky in one hand, and a glass in the other; crying out, as he poured the liquor and raised the glass in mock salutation to the crowd:

"Here's fun, durn you! I'm still a-kicking. I hold out yet; but, in your lingo, I consider it a hefty comberation of mingled menageries to

run in on a pilgrim. I've got grip though, and don't you forget that I'm running the Nugget Hotel, and I think of extending my business up and down your blasted one-horse burg!"

Never were men more surprised than were these worthy "citz." Tom Jones was indignant, and more than that, for he recognized the man whom he and Hank had set down as the soft tender-foot, and here he was boasting of running the town, and had evidently started business by setting fire to the shanties, and murdering some feeble woman; for a woman it must be. Tom could not think that this young fresh from the States would tackle a man. His standing too in their favorite bar, and drinking with such a display of bravado, irritated them the more from the fact that they were all terribly thirsty.

One thing was certain. The tender-foot must swing. A lynch picnic would come in nicely at this stage of the proceedings, to fill the bill of the jamboree.

"Come out o' thar!" yelled the sheriff, springing forward, with a score of the "citz" at his back; while Giant George rushed for the corpse, and finding the same nailed tightly to the slabs, he cut away what he now saw at a glance was a spotless white sheet, but which had in places been smeared with gore.

Many "citz" followed the burly scout, and as the latter ripped off the cloth, entirely displaying the dead victim, loud ejaculations of wonder and surprise went the rounds of the excited crowd.

At this instant, loud rung the order of Tom Jones.

"Surrender! If yer don't, we'll fill yer es full of holes es an ole honey-comb!"

The words reached the ears of the giant scout, who called out loudly in reply:

"Hold on, Tom Jones! Dog-gone yer, don't yer shoot, er you an' me'll fight!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BUTCHER FROM WILMINGTON.

"Hold on, Tom Jones! Don't yer shoot, er me an' you'll fight!"

There was no need, however, of this vigorous admonition from Giant George; for, as the sheriff raised his revolver, Arizona Jack, the mysterious stranger, sprang aside, slammed the door of Nugget Hotel, and the astonished "citz," heard the iron bar ring into its place.

Tom Jones rushed like a deer around the corner to the side door; but, with a laughing "No, you don't," this was also slammed in his face, and barred.

"Wa-al, by the bleed o' ole Dan Boone, ef thet tender-foot ain't a rattlin' roarer, I'm a Puite pappoose! Reckon he kin keep his cog o' Arizone Jack without disgracin' weuns, ef he hain't done nothin' bilious."

Thus spoke the discomfited sheriff, while the "citz" gathered around him, and growled with baffled rage.

"Come this-a-ways; yer dang'd passel o' bamboozled idjots!" yelled the giant scout.

Tom and the "citz" ran quickly and joined the other party, the sheriff springing up by the side of George, who still stood by the strangely nailed-up corpse.

"Wa-al," said the burly scout curtly; "what does yer think o' thet, Tom Jones?"

"Dog my cats!" exclaimed the sheriff, in amazement. "Hit's a dang'd 'Pache brave!"

"Reckon thet air thing ain't much of a conundrum, Tom," returned the scout; "but thet coon over et the Nugget air the boss conundrum hisself, an' yer c'u'dn't guess him, c'u'd yer?"

"Yer doesn't mean to say thet tender-foot what calls hisself Arizone Jack done for this red?" exclaimed Tom.

"Didn't know his handle," was the reply; "but thet's jist whar my affidavy comes in, an' mebbeso he's saved the burg. Ef this pestiferous, painted scarifier war alone hit's all right; but ef ary other gut away, that's 'Pache music ahead. Hit's one o' Victor'a's boss sculpers, Red Hand; jist gaze et thet paw will ye?"

Giant George pointed to one hand of the dead brave, through the palm of which was driven a spike to the head, pinning it tight to the slabs of the shanty, as in the same manner were the feet and the other hand. The hand thus designated had evidently been burned badly, causing it to have a strange red hue, different from the other.

"Thar's a dozen er so bleed-holes in the conndemned cuss's carkiss, what we kin see, an' mebbe so es many more abint. He must 'a' fit with double distilled hydrofobic mad, but thet tenderhoof gut away with him. I pards with the kid what's now runnin' the Nugget. Come,

boyees; we-uns must git chin with him, fer this air serious biz. Ther burg may be in danger. Victor'a c'n'd do a heaptowards cleanin' us out of ther red sculper caught us nappin'. He's a ragin' tornader, an' ther hain't no discount on him."

The shanties burned fiercely, and illuminated the whole town; and, as the "citz" pointed for the Nugget, all were again brought to a halt and filled with the utmost astonishment, for, sitting on the window-sill of Marm Holbrook's "bestest room," his legs dangling free and easy outside, was Arizona Jack!

"Say, yer all-fired rip-staving galoots!" he sung out; "how many circusses and menageries have bu'sted in this cussed country, that I see so many 'Wild Men of Borneo,' 'Kehoe Giants,' and such kind of animals? Or is this the headquarters that they all come from, a sort of Barnum nursery, so to speak? Reckon the boss showman has collected and corralled you all here, to get up a corner on the other canvas knights."

"Wa-al, dang me!" exclaimed Tom Jones; "ef I ever seed a mild, skim-milk sort o' chap change so all-firedly in sich a fleetin' period. Let's glide up nigher, boyees, an' gaze at ther cuss."

"Reckon," yelled one of the "citz," "thet we-uns hes gut you corralled 'bout now, my young jack-rabbit."

"That would do me for a cognomen," returned Arizona Jack, meditatively, "if I had only once thought of it. But as I have my belt engraved already, I'll stand and 'whoop her through or bu'st' on 'Arizona Jack.' There would have been one letter less to cut; and I'm an economical man clear through. But, as I remarked, my unsophisticated raccoons, the thing is did. Yes, you have me corralled, as you say; but I'm fixed for grub and drink for one while. I'll run the hotel alone, register my name every day, and pass a half-eagle from one pocket into the other."

"By ther perrarer-dog-eatin' Piutes!" said Giant George, admiringly; "I've bin samplin' the coon with eye an' ear, an' I assewvates ag'in, an' takes a double-barreled affidavy that I pards with him. You hear me, boyees! I'm talkin' stud-hoss sense when I chalks him down a fit pard fer ther 'Bald-headed Eagle o' the Rockies.' Come on, pards, an' pay yer respec's."

Headed by Giant George and Tom Jones, the "citz" now advanced toward the Nugget more amicably.

"Good-evening, coyotes; I'm going down to take a drink." Thus spoke Arizona Jack as they came up, at the same time slinging his legs into the window.

"Hold on thar, a minit! we want ter perlaver a leetle, pard," called out the giant scout.

"No, you don't, my bucks! I'm up to your little games. If you want any first-class English from me, you must leave your pistols. You comprehend?"

"All kerrect," agreed Giant George. "Tom an' I'll leave our shooters ahind—look!" and, holding their revolvers in air over their heads, they bade the "citz" take them, and then advanced beneath the window.

"Now, pard," said the scout, "sling us your story. Who's run ag'in' yer, an' what's yer so skeery o' we-uns fer?"

"Well, I don't think you can run in any new racket on me yet awhile, so I'll tell you square up. I came to this town two days ago, to get an insight into frontier life and look around me generally, for I've had a hankering after more knowledge of that description than I could get in periodicals, although I have managed to pick up some little in the way of ideas from such sources. I put up at this hotel—God save the mark!—and lay low the first day, writing a long letter to my brother, Tom Burke, in Wilmington, Delaware—By the way, he's stuck on frontier life, also; but if he'd been with me the last six hours, he'd hash pork in Second Street Market as long as the Lord lets him linger on this terrestrial sphere. But, to proceed: I put in to-day—that is, the day just past—talking with Madam Holbrook, and thinking I'd go through the town and up the mountain in the evening. I didn't think then that the infernal town would attempt to *go through me*."

Here Giant George and Tom Jones burst into hearty laughter.

"You needn't laugh, gentlemen, for there don't any laugh come in through the whole business. Mind you, when I struck this burg I was a mild, inoffensive traveler, admiring the works of nature, and eager, even anxious, to study the wilds of my country; but I hadn't any idea or inclination to *run wild myself*.

"The history of this town, so romantic in situation and so dashed primitive in construction, was very interesting to me; and Madam Holbrook volunteered—it strikes me now she was awfully eager to do so—to show me her front room, and also to relate a very moving and entertaining story in connection with it. As a matter of course, I acquiesced with the utmost alacrity, and we mounted the stairs, when I was shown the very identical bed upon which slept the celebrated Angel of the Pinaleno Range—By the way, I had never heard of this celestial personage, as I hail from the wilds of Wilmington, so closely walled in by the Delaware, Christiana and Brandywine rivers on three sides, and the Schutzen Park on the fourth, that we seldom hear of the more progressive parts of this great country—Sardinebox City, for instance. But I was much interested in the Angel, nevertheless, as also in one Giant George and a pet jackass of his—"

"Whoop!" cried out George, interrupting him, and then jumping into the air. Turning to Tom Jones, he said, in a low tone, and one that was unusual with him:

"Jumpin' Jericho, Tom! Don Diablo an'—" The scout hesitated, and then went on: "The burro, an' Marm Holbrook, an' Hank air in ther hearse! They air thar till yit, an' we-uns must run 'em in."

"Never mind 'em, George," said the sheriff. "They air all asleep, an' es safe es if they was in ther 'Nugget.'"

"What's the matt'r down there?" asked Arizona Jack. "Did I hit you hard, inadvertently, in my narration, or have you had a genteel sufficiency of it?"

"Perceed," said Giant George, with a wave of the hand; "we air a-listenin' ter every word, with our ha'r jam'd back o' our ears."

"All right," said Jack. "Well, as I remarked, I was deeply interested, and studying on the horrors of the story, thanked the good Lord that I was not on the spot to act the part of Hank, George, Black Bill, Sport, or any of the crowd. I was thinking this over as I was going to the stairs, but not so deeply but that I heard Madam Holbrook remark, with just a shade of anxiety, that she expected her husband to have the jim-jams. Now, gentlemen, I didn't want any jim-jams in mine, either personally or surroudingly, and I resolved, as I stepped down the first stair, that I would vacate the 'Nugget' and camp in a shaft or under a bowlder, then steal in on the sly and ask my excellent landlady through the window for a cold clam, or anything that was handy, being braced all the time for a run back to the bowlder or shaft, where I had squatted. Now, this thing was a regularly sworn-to resolution, as I reached one-third down that unlucky stairway; but it was the opening of a tragic drama, which I wouldn't play through on a season for all the stamps that Buffalo Bill or Bill Astor ever handled, personally or through agents.

"As I said, I got one-third of the way down, when, by the Great Caesar! such yells and shrieks filled the Nugget that I thought at least a thousand most terrible murders were being perpetrated, by a pre-arranged signal, all at once and upon every sex, age and condition of servitude. I stopped in horror. I heard Madam Holbrook say, in a terrified voice, 'Bless my soul! Hank's gut 'em. He's gut 'em bad. I tolle yer so, Jack!—this, as in a dream. But, by the Royal Harry, I was not in a dream-like state long, for I was hurled like a catapult to the floor below, and then an avalanche of female Holbrook was launched upon me! Launched is too mild a term, for she came as if shot from a hundred-pounder. I tell you, mentally I was mad, but physically I was powerless; being rolled over and over, and mixed up generally with that shrieking female.

"I began to think there must be a mistake as to which side of the Holbrook family had the jim-jams. I was so broken up, jammed up and limp, that I couldn't have chawed clabber if I had been starving. I prayed fast and most earnestly. I felt a flicker of dry goods brush the agony sweat from my brow, like the swish of prairie grass when a tornado strikes it. Then I knew that the female Holbrook had gone. I tried next to fancy what might be the consequences if the male Holbrook should really have the prevailing epidemic, and should come under the tender care of his spouse; but just then came renewed shrieks and yells; I heard the crashing of glass, and having managed to raise myself to a sitting posture, I saw the door between the bar and the kitchen burst open with a sudden bang, and a big dog went past me like a blue streak, but I could see that its tail was between its legs, and I knew that dog had sense.

"As the door burst open, a terrible sight burst upon me. I saw one man drag another from under the bar by the legs and swing the shrieking wretch over his shoulders, holding him by the feet like a sack of grain, and then run like a fiend, the poor man hanging head downward. It's a solemn fact!

"I thought it was a deuce of a hotel wher. I first struck it, for the landlord had more whisky under his skin than there was behind the bar. Thought I, this can't be a real frontier business. It's a put up job. But I tumbled to reason. There was but one thing to be done, and that was, to make it appear frontier-like. They didn't want me in the hotel, and that was the border way of getting me out. The landlord got up a case of impromptu jim-jams, which he went into as he heard me coming down-stairs. His wife, at the signal, hurled herself upon me and danced a fandango on the most sensitive portion of my anatomy. She wanted to smash me up so badly that I couldn't carry my baggage away. They wanted my effects, and seeing I didn't go at once, they even forced that dog into the plot, and sent him on the fly to open the door. Not content with that, they proceeded to give me a free exhibition of the way in which guests who are not wanted are disposed of in Arizona, by a specimen case right under my nose.

"Says I, by Heavens, if you think I want to stay here, you are greatly fooled. Hang the rifle and saddle-bags! You can have them, and welcome. So I crawled out the back door. Then I thought I would come across the street, and perhaps some one would accommodate me till I could get my horse from the stable; but, Great Caesar! when I got to the corner, I saw the man running with the other man hanging over his shoulders, and howling like a pack of demons, while the whole infernal population had turned out, and were yelling like so many fiends. It was evident they didn't want me in the town even.

"Then I caught sight of a stage piled full on top, with a mountain howitzer mule mixed in, coming on a wild gallop. And such yells! Great Lord! I can hear them yet. Well, thought I, so they hadn't quite enough here to drive out an inoffensive traveler, so they sent to Colorado for desperadoes. The stage came a-humming, and the whole population rushed toward me. Everything that I had gone through up to this was nothing. If pandemonium hadn't taken a powerful emetic, then I knew nothing of the effects of that kind of medicine. They were showing me frontier life with a vengeance, but I had seen enough of it. I turned to crawl back, when I verily believe a couple of hundred of them commenced shooting at me, and yelling out for me to stop and face the music. I forgot that I was already a used-up man, so I sprung to my feet, and made for the bowlders like a madman. I jumped into the first shaft I reached, hoping to land in China; but I struck mud and water at about twenty feet. How long I remained there in the darkness, I don't know; but it was long enough to make me mad as a batter, and set me swearing that I'd have my horse and equipments.

"Out I crawled from the shaft, when I found it was night, and all quiet along the range. Then I started for the hotel, bound to get my tricks and horse, and to put out for—a worse place, possibly—but one in which such performances would be in the way of legitimate business, and where they would not be likely to pile quite so much on a stranger at the first introduction.

"I got lost, and the first thing I knew, an Indian went for me. First, I thought it belonged to a cigar store, for the town seemed deserted, and he was the only human in sight. Thinks I, they have all gone to bed, having painted some cuss up to scare me out, if I came back; but I didn't have any fight left in me. I think he must have seen me, though it was dark, and I ran off and crawled under a shanty. The red cuss followed, and set it on fire, to burn me out, I suppose; but I crawled under and came out on the other side, and then cut through the sage brush to the next shanty, and under that, cursing the town and all that was in it every time I laid my hand down. Hanged if he didn't set that shanty on fire, too! Then I began to see that the situation was really becoming desperate. I got boiling mad, and swore I'd stay in the confounded burg, and run it, too. The town had been running me long enough.

"I jumped the cuss, and we had a lively time of it; but I can handle a knife, and I laid him out at last. He gave a yell, and I saw about a dozen more painted cusses cut and run, for the fire was blazing up lively by this time.

How I fixed the red scoundrel you have seen. I hung up his carcass, and stole a sheet to put over him to keep off the flies. I'm a butcher from Wilmington—that's what I am—and I'm going to clean out this town when I get a little rested. Just see if I don't.

"I'm a cold-blooded murderer from this out, but you roosters got me into it. Send your select men around first. I'll clean them. Then, the citizens, as soon as you like. I'm a stranger, weak, and considerably cut up, but this is a worse town than a Couanche village, and it has got to go under.

"There won't be tin enough left of this blasted Sardine-box to make a tobacco tag, when I get through with it!"

CHAPTER V.

THE WAR-PATH.

"SEE hyer, pard Jack," said Giant George: "hit's all hunk. We-uns tumbles ter 'bout half yer lingo, but hit's enough an' more ter show, yer white an' squar'. Thar ain't a pilgrim in this hyar burg but what'll go his pile on yer, an' we'd like ter 'dopt yer right from the word go. Yer ther mistakenest man in Arizone. Hank Holbrook would 'a' had ther jim-jams ef we-uns hadn't shook 'em outer him. My cog air Giant George; an' hit war me an' Don Diablo what jest 'roved in ther burg, an' sot ther circus a-goin'. I'm the Bald-headed Eagle o' ther Rockies, an' I wants yer fer a pard. Come down. Open ther shebang, an' we'll all errigate. Then yer kin fix up an' we'll pull up the hearse what we lef' below when we see'd ther blaze."

To say that Arizona Jack was astonished, would be putting it mild. Slowly, however, all the skein was untangled. His head had struck the floor when he and Marm Holbrook took the combination Niagara leap, which had somewhat disarranged his reasoning machinery; but it had been the best tumble he ever made, for in one jump, he had won the good-will and fast friendship of the mountain men, including Giant George, the boss scout and pard of Yuba Bill and a host of other notable New Mexico and Arizona trailers. For a moment Jack gazed down at the "citz," then slinging his sombrero whirling through the street, he sprung inside, and went down the stairs in the darkness nearly as fast as when he had been propelled by Marm Holbrook. In a trice he had thrown open the door, and springing forward grasped the outstretched hand of Giant George; while Tom Jones and the other "citz" flocked around, staring curiously at the much torn and demoralized stranger, whose experience had been so rough on the second day of his stay in their burg.

"Pard," said the giant scout, "we're all right glad ter shake with yer, an' ter see that yer has got purty well mashed up in short meter, but yer'll soon be O. K. ag'in, an' kin flicker 'roun' hyer with yer pard's at every turn."

"Low me, es sheriff o' this burg," said Tom Jones, his pride of off-e suddenly returning; "low me ter welcome yer ter Sardine-box City, an' ter say that everything hyer air open ter yer." Then turning about, he added: "Feller-citz, this hyer pilgrim, Arizona Jack, air no more a tender-hoof. He has sent over ther range Red Hand, ther 'Pache scariifer in a fa'r knife fight, an' don't any on yer fergit hit!"

All grasped hands with Jack in genuine friendship.

"Now, Tom Whipple," instructed the sheriff, "take Jack inter Marm Holbrook's kitchen, strike a light, an' fix things fer a wash, an' then patch up them bruises o' hisn. Arter he braces up with grub an' liquids, he kin turn in, an' he'll wake up fresh fer biz; fer I reckon he kin hev a show ter sen' some more 'Paches on ther 'long dark trail.' Which way did ther 'tarnal red niggers skute, Jack?"

"Toward the mountains," was the reply.

"How many did yer see flicker?" asked George.

"About a dozen, but there might have been more of them among the rocks. The death-yell, I suppose, made them think that the town was alarmed, and the fire-light made them good targets."

"Yer has gut solid hoss sense, Jack," said Giant George. "Fix our pard up, Whipple, an' take good keer o' him. We-uns'll take 'bout four fingers, then roll up ther hearse easy like, so es not ter wake up ther passengers. Don Diablo'll be dang'd glad ter git sich a long snooze, fer I gin'rally rattles him 'round purty lively when I'm on a jamboree."

Whipple accompanied Arizona Jack into the kitchen, and proceeded in a business-like manner to make a new man of him. The "citz"

filed into the bar, and packed the room, Tom Jones acting as bar-keeper with an officious manner and many flourishes, not forgetting to fill his own glass to the brim.

"All ready, boyees?" inquired Giant George.

"All set—all full," came from the "citz."

"Hyer's ter Arizone Jack, ther slasher o' Red Hand, ther pestiferous scarefyin' 'Pache coyote!"

The toast was greeted with cheers, and drank with the greatest satisfaction to all, for they had yelled themselves hoarse. Giant George then went into the kitchen to see if Arizona Jack was being "fixed."

"How do he pan out, Whipple, in the way o' bleed-holes?"

"He is cut several times, but he did not allow Red Hand to get a direct point stab at him. If he had, he'd have been a goner. His clothing being thick and new prevented the Apache from doing as much mischief as he would had he been dressed differently. He has six cuts, but none deep, and his head is badly bruised from the fall down-stairs. But he'll soon be all right. The worst thing is the loss of blood, but he is young and of splendid physique, so that won't be so much matter. He needs food, and a good night's sleep, and then Nature may be trusted to do the rest."

"Wa-al, Jack, ole pard, take keer o' yerself, an' lay low. Hyer's whar Marm Holbrook patched me up arter Sport shot me, an' I was on ther trail wi' ther Angel ther same night. So long! We-uns is goin' arter ther dog-goned hearse."

"Never mind me, pard George," said Jack. "I feel like a new man already. So long!"

Giant George and the "citz" then set out. Luckily the moon had now risen, and they soon got a sight of the coach.

"Boyees!" exclaimed the scout, "thar's somethin' wrong, dang'd ef thar ain't! Don Diablo ain't thar!"

All saw this fact, and stamped in a wild run.

George reached the coach first. The doors were open, and he sprung in; but the next moment he was out and rolling on the ground in an agony of grief such as the "citz" had never before seen him display, and for which they were unable to account. The loss of Don Diablo they knew would affect him greatly, but the burro had often strayed for days, and then turned up. Marm Holbrook and Hank were gone, but it was probable that the latter had an attack of *delirium tremens*, and had run wild among the foot-bills, his wife following him. They would fetch up in due time.

The coach now swarmed with men, and Tom Jones soon discovered that the boot had been cut open, and probably many things taken. He sprung at once to the ground, and got down on his knees by the side of Giant George, who was rolling over and over, and groaning in apparent agony.

"Pard George," said the sheriff, sympathizingly, "what ails yer? For God's sake speak. We-uns 'll find Hank and Marm Holbrook. They has gut tired waitin' fer us, an' made a break fer ther burg with Don Diablo, an' gut lost. Cheer up, pard."

Tom knew better. He knew that they had been captured.

"George," he now said, "did yer hev ther money aboard ter purchase ther mersheeney? Never mind; we-uns don't keer a dang. Let her rip! We'll pan out dust enough ter make all squar', ef yer was 'sponsible fer hit. Git up, ole pard, er I'll hev spasmodics an' skip over ther divide."

The giant scout staggered to his feet, trembling from head to heel, going around the coach, tearing his hair and grinding his teeth; then he threw his old sombrero to the earth, and raising his clinched fists as he bent backward, fastened his eyes upon the heavens, while from his white and trembling lips came in hoarse, unnatural tones the words:

"God A'mighty, I never doubted yer afore, never; but I, Giant George, doubts yer now!"

Tom Jones and the others were petrified with wonder. They first thought that he had been seized with *delirium tremens*, but they soon realized that this could not be the case; his emotions were too regular and too intense, and his face had the pallor of death. He had been all right until he had found that the coach was empty. This proved that the change had been occasioned by something or some one very dear to him, and now lost. All knew, however, that it was not the former, for if George had been a millionaire and became a pauper in a day, he would laugh over it.

Tom Jones went up to his pard once more,

and putting his arm around him, said in what was a low and pleading voice for him:

"Pard George, fer ther love of yer mother, dead an' gone, tell yer ole pard what hes struck yer?"

"The burly, gigantic form trembled for a moment, as if even those tones grated upon a sacred grief, which bound him as with a chain. Then he pointed toward the town, as he whispered hoarsely:

"Come! we-uns wants hosses quick as God will let us. We must ride, fly! Look!"

Staggering to the coach, he pulled an arrow from beneath the wood-work and the canvas lining, but an inch of the shaft having projected, but this his practiced eye had caught at the first.

He twisted it in his hands, tore it to splinters in his teeth, and held the fragments within his clinched hand, which he raised heavenward, gazing upward at the same time, as if taking an oath; but no sound left his lips.

The "citz" stood staring upon him in awe, and even Tom dared not speak to him, as he strode in long and rapid strides toward the town, all walking as fast as they could, in order that they might not lose sight of him.

What it all meant none could imagine, and for the first time they began to fear him. They now believed that the giant scout was insane. They knew that the capture of Hank and wife, and of Don Diablo, could not have given occasion for this extraordinary exhibition of emotion.

Straight to the "Nugget" he went, and halted at the door, having by that time grown calmer as he said:

"Ef yer hes any regard fer yer God, fer yerselves, er fer me, git ready fer a long trail, an' a hard one, es speedy es yer kin!"

Every man rushed, without a word, to prepare for the trail, for they now saw that Giant George was as sane as any one among them, and that he was getting himself ready for the start.

Tom Jones made his preparations in five minutes, and riding to the "Nugget," dismounted and informed Arizona Jack that his landlord and landlady had been captured by Apaches, and that all were going on the trail. They would, therefore, leave him in charge of the burg; but Jack indignantly declined the honor, and swore stoutly that he would go also, as he was as brisk as a jack-rabbit, reasoning that it would be slow business any way, and would not tax his strength, or start his wounds.

Tom Jones remonstrated in vain, and Jack went about getting himself in readiness at once.

Giant George soon galloped up, and with him were about twenty of the "citz," being all that had horses. Tom filled all their canteens, and they drew up in line; when, without a word, the giant scout led off in the direction of the coach.

Here he came to a halt, and raised his hand, making a gesture to call their attention.

Arizona Jack now rode up beside him, fully equipped, and feeling in much better condition than he did previous to his wash and general "fix up."

Giant George gave him his hand quietly, and with a glance of gratitude, and then addressed the "citz":

"Pards, I know yer has bin thinkin' hit mighty strange, ther way of actin' o' mine since I fust diskivered ther hearse war empty; but when I 'spain, I think yer will all 'low hit war called fer. Yer see ther hearse air bigger nor ary one ever driv' inter this burg. I gut hit fer a purpos'. Yer see'd inside a seat fixed on springs like a bed, an' jest es soft. Wa-al, on ther seat thar rid a lady who war sick with heaps o' trouble, an' yer mought think queer I 'lowed Sam ter drive so dang'd fast, but she wanted me ter do hit. She said hit 'minded her of ther sea in a ship. She wanted things ter go on jest es they did. She wanted ter hear yer all yell, an' raise ther very deuce, 'cos hit 'minded her of other times."

"She has los' by yaller fever, within two mon's, her ole dad, her sister, an' her pard—that is, her husband—an' she wanted ter come with ole Giant George ter Sardine-box City, an' see ther boyees, an' look et her brother's grave ag'in, in Dead Man's Gulch. Pards—and the big tears coursed down the cheeks of the scout as he spoke—"pards, ther dang'd scarefyin' 'Paches has tuck Hank, an' Marm Holbrook, an' Don Diablo, an' they has tuck ther Angel o' Penarlayn Range!"

A wild and vengeful yell rung from every throat, and men spurred their horses close together, in a mixed and maddened mob.

Giant George now sprung from his horse, and went down on his knees beyond the coach and the group of "citz." He rubbed the tears out of his eyes, roughly and hastily with his buckskin sleeves, and then searched the dewy sward for the trail of Victoria's band of murderers.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ORIGINAL PRAYER.

WHEN Giant George proceeded to examine the ground on the south side of the coach, his object was to endeavor, by the "sign," to ascertain the number of the war-party. His judgment told him, and the point from whence the arrow had been fired led to the same conclusion, that the Indians had not only approached from the direction of the canyon, but that they had massed on that side of the coach, Sardine-box City being on the opposite side. Consequently the "citz" had been addressed from the side next the burg, and kept themselves there, as they watched the movements of the burly scout.

To a tender-foot, the proceedings of Giant George would have seemed foolish in the extreme, but every point between the coach and the canyon was carefully examined, except of course where boulders and clumps of cacti made it unnecessary.

During the examination the "citz" made a full inspection of the coach, including the springy and cushioned seat which their benefactress had occupied.

"Who put Marm Holbrook in ther coach?" inquired the sheriff.

"I chuck her in," answered one of the "citz."

"Didn't yer see nobody on ther back seat?"

"Ther curt'ins was down, an' I didn't look. I didn't s'pose ther war ary a passenger along."

"Hit's strange that Marm Holbrook didn't see ther Ang'l, and yell out ter us boyees; an' hit's stranger yet that George never tolle us she war with him."

"I suppose," put in Arizona Jack, "that the lady wanted to give you all a surprise. Perhaps she intended to get into the "Nugget" without being seen, go to her room, and have a night's rest before undergoing the excitement; although I must say I think she had considerable of it as it was, judging from what I heard of it. However, as she is ill and weak, and has had a long and tedious journey, it is quite likely that she was asleep when Marm Holbrook was fired into the coach."

"Pard Jack," said Tom Jones, "all yer hes spit out is solid hoss sense, an' I reckon hit's bin 'bout es yer say. But, by the lord Harry, I'll save her, er die a-tryin'. Thar ain't a man hyer but hes bin saved by her from bein' short o' bread an' bacon more'n onc't since we-uns see'd her."

"You don't suppose they'll murder, or torture the captives, do you, Tom?" asked Arizona Jack.

"They mought, when they gits 'er the'r vilidge, an' they air dead sure ter butcher 'em ef we runs in on 'em suddint like. Hit's gut to be dang'd fine work. Hit's a hard ole section too."

With long strides Giant George now came up to them. There was a hard look of mingled anguish and hate frozen upon his face, which seemed to have aged ten years since he arrived.

Springing upon his steed, he spurred up to the "citz," saying in a cold, hard voice:

"Pards, thar's 'bout twenty o' ther red hell-yuns what war hyer, an' I know'd thar warn't more, er they'd tuck a streak through ther burg. Mebbe so they'll jine another party in a day's ride, but I hope not. Tom, yer hed better take ten men, an' glide down ther stage trail, an' see ef ther sculpers went thet a-way; while t'other boyees an' me'll jist meander through the foot-hills in ther way o' Dead Man's Gulch. Strike straight fer ter meet us, an' we may see something afore hit's mornin'. We hes a dead sure thing on thar strikin' up ther range, either by ther canyon, er ther open perrarer. Ef thar's two parties, they'll be brash, an' show open sign, but ef thar's only one they'll leave a blind trail, an' lay low, fer they know we'll folle'r."

"Shall I go with you, pard George?" asked Jack.

"Hit'll be ther heftiest travelin', but ef yer thinks yer kin stan' hit, I'd like ter hev yer 'long o' me."

"All right! I'll go, an' ef I break down I'll camp by myself; but I think I can make the rifle."

Not another word was spoken. The scout,

followed by Arizona Jack and nine of the "citz," filed through the boulders and cedars west of them, and Tom Jones and his party, in the same order, struck out south along the stage road; to pass by it the rough route toward the open plain, and then west, up the range, parallel with the course of Giant George and his party, the latter being in the rough canyons and foot-hills. Thus the night-riders glided silently in the moonlight, no noise accompanying their movements except the occasional striking of a hoof against a stone.

A score of men armed to the teeth, their hearts filled with a mad longing for revenge, a host in themselves, but yet only hoping by stealth and strategy to gain their object. But then, after the captives were safe, woe be to the red marauders, even were vengeance hundreds of miles away! So, snake-like, on they wound.

Giant George chose the low ground to avoid observation from any near spy, and at length entered the head of a wash-out that at first would scarce conceal a burro, but which grew deeper and deeper, until its sides towered high above their heads. From this they entered the same canyon, up which, three months previous, George had guided Lena Lawrence to her brother's grave.

On, on, in the dark depths, until a break in the bank allowed the moon to shine down upon the bed of the canyon. Here the giant scout threw up his hand, and every man drew rein, while their leader dismounted to ascertain if the Apaches had traveled in this direction; for, until this point was reached, it was impossible to tell, on account of the darkness.

Some ten paces from his horse went Giant George; then, turning to face the moon, he knelt to the earth, but as he bent forward to search for "sign," he was brought to his feet on the instant, for there burst upon the night air a cry of the bitterest anguish and hopeless despair.

There was no longer need to hunt for the trail.

Never did man bound to the saddle with more alacrity than did the scout, as he started at headlong speed, followed by the gallant mountain men.

Once again that fearful cry pierced the night air; and on, like an arrow shot from a bow went Giant George. Suddenly he turned to the right, and disappeared among the gloomy depths of a side gorge, soon followed by his men, their teeth set, their weapons gripped, their eyes fixed and staring into the dark chaos before them.

Soon the giant scout emerged from the darkness, his horse plunging madly into the circular basin at the head of Dead Man's Gulch.

Not twenty feet from the dark chasm, out of which he had plunged, Giant George brought his horse to his haunches, and the next moment he was joined by Arizona Jack, soon followed by the "citz," and all, as they came to a halt, sitting appalled on their steeds, as once more that dread cry sounded high up in front of them, over the pines that shadowed the grave of poor Sam Lawrence. Another instant, and the moon shone out, disclosing a scene that stopped the beating of their hearts. The naked body of a man, white, terribly white, as contrasted with the black rocks and stripes of blood, was suspended some thirty yards up the bank, and above the pines!

About twenty feet above the body were two scrub pines. These pines were not more than ten feet distant from each other, and to each was attached a rope, these below being passed through the muscles of the ankles of the tortured man. Thus he hung, head downward. The man was scalpsless, his head a mass of gore, and his eyes had been dug from their sockets. Blades of the Spanish dagger plant projected from every portion of his body, and from the wounds thus made the blood trickled down upon the green foliage.

When we consider that the men who now gazed upon this horrible scene knew that the savage act had been committed by the same red fiends who held a beautiful woman whom they all idolized, and two friends and neighbors of their own captive, we can more clearly enter into their feelings, which would have been heart-rending even had this not been the case. Tom Jones and his men had by this time come up, and he and Giant George, each taking an extra lariat from the cantle of their saddles, bounded up the rough cliff to a point beyond the tortured being, a way which the scout knew would lead toward the pines to which the ropes were attached, these trees standing upon a narrow shelf, but which was still quite accessible.

The pines were soon reached, an extra lariat secured to one of the ropes which held the sufferer; the other rope was then cut, the connection with the first severed, and the victim of Apache torture slowly lowered. A number of the "citz" stood ready at the foot of the cliff, and received the sufferer, who was tenderly carried through the *motte*, and laid upon a blanket. Those who had ascended the cliff were soon with them, and bending over him.

"May ther Ormigthy fergit me forever," exclaimed Giant George, "ef hit ain't poor Terrif!"

"Hit ain't Terrif no longer," said Tom Jones. "Ther good Lord hes taken him whar thar ain't no 'Paches."

None were there, except Arizona Jack, who did not know Terrif the *vaquero*, and all bowed their heads as they recognized an old friend, and took an extra oath of fearful vengeance.

Yes; that poor, gore-covered and mutilated corpse, was the once gay Terrif, the "Terrific Tarantula of the Tropics," as he had been dubbed, the same who had once ridden from the range, at the request of Giant George, to ask the aid of the "citz" in capturing the Panthers in their den, and recover the girl that Sardine-box City had adopted, this same "Angel," who had then been captured by El Capitan's ruffians who had found her weeping over the grave she had traveled so many weary miles to find. And now poor Terrif had been foully tortured and murdered over that very grave.

Strong men wept as they gazed upon that mutilated corpse, but the very discovery of the tortured boy proved that the Apaches were near at hand, for he had been but recently hung to the pines. This fact compelled them now to be very cautious.

Poor Terrif had been faithful unto death, and his dying shrieks of agony had warned his best friends that they were on dangerous ground; that they were now on the "warm" trail of the demons they sought, and that even then, the black, snake-like eyes of an Apache spy might be looking down upon them.

And what agony now wrung the heart of the brave scout, who knew that Lena Reynolds had, amid her savage captors, been hurried along the same trail that she had traveled with himself, but three months before; and had been compelled, perhaps, to sit her horse amid those paint-daubed savages and witness the horrible torture of poor Terrif, who must have been suddenly come upon and captured at Dead Man's Gulch!

What must have been her feelings to see her murdered brother's grave once more, and she bound amid those bloodthirsty Apaches, and being forced away, perhaps forever, from all that she loved, to a fate far worse than death!

She, who had so recently lost all—father, sister, and husband, within two short months—now to be torn even from the last vestige of civilization, and forced onward, onward to a fate, the horrors of which she could but dimly picture to herself! "Oh, God, where is Thy justice?"

It was little wonder that Giant George, in his agony and blindness, had dared to question it.

The giant scout now, with Tom Jones, Arizona Jack, and one of the "citz," each caught up a corner of the blanket, and bore the remains of poor Terrif into the *motte* of murmuring pines, the mysterious whisperings of which could be of naught but death, murderous, bloody death.

There they laid him by the side of that well known grave; and there, close by Sam Lawrence's resting-place, a shallow hole was soon made, and into it the dead cow-boy was laid.

Then Giant George threw down his sombrero, and lifted up his hands and eyes in prayer, while his rough followers, all around the edge of the *motte*, their bridle reins over their arms, looked on with tears in their eyes, and with uncovered heads:

"Ormigthy God! Hit's I, Giant George, a talkin' ter yer, though yer doesn't often hear me. Yer knows how poor Terrif hev suffered hyer, how ther reds hev tortur'd him, an' I doesn't know why yer ever made ther 'Pache. Yer hes see'd ther cussed deed, and kindly tuck him outer sufferin'."

"We-uns axes yer, prays yer, ter take him ter yer bosom, an' ter treat him kind, fer he war a squar' an' white boy, an' always doin' good. Lead us on ther trail ter resky ther Angel, an' gi'n her stren'th ter b'ar up ontill we folds her, an' Hank, an' Marm Holbrook inter our perfectin' arms. Thet's what we air a-prayin' from our hearts an' souls, ormigthy an' merciful God! Amen."

A low and solemn *amen* in response sounded through the *motte*, and then the grave of the murdered boy was filled in.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANGEL.

The old "hearse" had been left in darkness, except that some moments after the sudden departure of Giant George and the "citz" when the flames from the shanties rose higher, a flickering light played upon the north side of it, showing Don Diablo standing lazily upon three legs, giving the other a temporary rest, while his long ears hung down as if all their muscles had been abstracted.

Beneath the burro lay poor Hank Holbrook, his mouth wide open, and his arms clutched around Don's fore-feet. At times Hank's muscles would twitch spasmodically, as though he were grappling with some imaginary foe, and then his grip would tighten about the legs of the burro; without, however, disturbing the slumbers of the latter in the least.

But, let us look inside this strangely situated vehicle. Marm Holbrook sat on the front seat, bolt upright, stiff and rigid, with her eyes fixed upon the curtained recess in the rear, where all was in darkness.

When the landlady had fallen down-stairs upon Arizona Jack, she had been greatly shocked, for there had been quite a struggle, and she knew that the young man must have been not a little hurt, as she had tumbled directly upon him, and with no gentle force at that.

When she had disentangled herself, she had made a rush, in her confusion and excitement, to the best room; but when she saw Tom Jones running up the street with Hank hanging over his back, she was so astonished that she knew not what to do next; and she feared as well that Arizona Jack would follow her in his *fury* at the treatment he had received, and inflict some personal violence upon her. Eventually she peeped down the stairway, and saw that Jack was gone; so she went stealthily to the kitchen, and then to the bar, where, hearing the hubbub, she ran into the street in time to witness the return of Giant George and Don Diablo.

Marm Holbrook was in an ecstasy. Sardine-box City was itself again. She had always been treated with the greatest respect by the rough characters of the town, and she was considered the mother of the burg, so to speak. Consequently, when the next moment she found herself roughly jerked from her feet and thrown into the coach, her sensitive nature received a severe shock, and she was so demoralized that she hardly knew where she was, and did not even glance around her new quarters, but smoothed her ruffled plumage as best she could, and sat listening to the speech of Giant George to the crowd, feeling better at once when she heard him say that the "Angel" had sent her "love to Marm Holbrook."

When the coach was turned about to return to the burg, she was at once relieved; but when the fire was discovered, and the "citz" let go, and rushed toward the scene, her heart sprung to her throat at the thought that perhaps Nugget Hotel and all the precious treasures in the best room were being destroyed; but the lurch of the coach forced her to her feet, and there, in front of her, she saw a form darker than the surroundings, with a face white as the purest marble. It was recumbent, was human without a doubt, and it was alive. But how was this? Surely no human being could have reclined in sleep through all the recent uproar and confusion. This the poor woman was not slow in deciding, and she began to tremble.

She could not remove her gaze from that white face, and at length she became convinced that its owner was dead.

What mystery was this?

Would Giant George, who, she felt sure, was "running the hearse," would he allow the driver to go at such a speed, to perform as they had done, all the time knowing what was within it? Not he. She knew him too well for that.

Then what was it?

"Great Lord," she cried out to herself, "is it a ghost?"

Marm Holbrook could hardly breathe. She forgot even that the Nugget Hotel, including her precious best room, might be in the embrace of the pitiless flames.

If ever the good woman had occasion—in her mind—to wish herself back "Texas-way," it was now; and she certainly did, from the very bottom of her heart, little dreaming that her present condition was heaven itself, compared

with what was to come. And come it did, too soon.

A scratching and tearing without caused Marm Holbrook to turn to the door of the coach, at once breaking the spell which had bound her. She wrenched at the fastenings, the door opened suddenly, and she fell into the arms of a hideous Apache brave, whose guttural "Ugh!" had to her all the sound of a death-warrant.

She strove to scream, but her tongue refused its office.

Just then the clear space around the coach was lit up by the flames from the burning shanties, and as this solitary brave secured his helpless captive, near a score of painted warriors galloped up on their half-wild steeds from among the bowlders and cedars.

Alternate stripes of vermilion and yellow ochre were drawn from throat to belt, on the bare breast of the chief; stripes of the same hues ran across his cheeks, and from brow to hair, while broad rings of silver filagree were upon his arms, and a crescent of silver engraved in Mexican style, was suspended from his neck by a silver chain.

His fillet, that confined his hair, and also three black eagle-feathers, was a band of interlocked links of silver. All this proved that he belonged to a tribe bordering on Mexico, and whose hunting-grounds were within her limits, as no other tribes are thus ornamented unless by barter they gain one or more of the most common silver ornaments of the kind that have been described.

An Apache, or a Comanche, never parts with the highly engraved set which he obtains by a raid into Mexico, except when his life goes with them.

Urging his steed up to the brave, who stood erect by his captive, the chief said, approvingly:

"Chuchillo has done well. El Orso knows he has but few mustangs. He shall have many. Where is Red Hand?"

"Muerto," was the laconic answer.

"Caspita!" exclaimed the chief in vexation, shaking his fist toward Sardine-box City. "El Orso will have many white scalps for his life. Red Hand was a great brave. His lodge-pole hangs heavy with scalps. His squaw will sleep in the *nopals*, and sit in ashes, until he is avenged; but that shall not be long. Come!"

Riding up to the coach, he jerked open the door, without dismounting; but his steed, with a snort of frantic terror bounded to one side, nearly unseating El Orso, and out from the vehicle stepped a woman so white, so ethereally beautiful that the chief sprung from his affrighted horse, while the animal made vain efforts to break away from him.

There the woman stood by the side of the coach, dressed in the deepest sable, and gazing upon the savage chief with an eye that never flinched. She even stepped toward him, and he, El Orso, the bloodthirsty Apache drew back.

Every warrior stood in his tracks, or sat his saddle, as if filled with some superstitious dread.

The mustangs trembled, snorted, and strove to fly.

"El Orso will bring a horse. Santissima Blanco has spoken, and her word is not the wind."

Thus spoke the black appareled woman with the ghastly white face, and if ever Indians were surprised, these Apaches were they. For the first time, probably, in their lives, they were thunderstruck, and overcome with awe.

For once too, El Orso was speechless, spell-bound, and frozen in his tracks, while cold and creeping chills appeared to be shaking his iron frame.

Walking up to one of the Indian mustangs that was trembling as she approached it, the woman loosened the jaw strap from the tree to which an Indian had bound him but a minute previous, spoke gently to the animal, patted him, and placed her hand caressingly upon his nostrils. Instantly the animal became docile, and after a few moments petting, nestled its head against the woman in black. Then springing into the saddle, she urged the horse toward the chief, calling out:

"Come! *Dios Grande* calls El Orso to the west."

There was a wildness in the eyes of the strange woman that would have been impressive under any circumstances, but which was now especially so to an ignorant savage; and all the superstitious nature of the chief and his braves was aroused. At that moment, Lena Reynolds, the "Angel o' the Penarlayno Range," could have ridden away free and un-

molested; but she was playing a bold game to save Marm Holbrook, who had been her friend in the past—a game which she could not have played had she not been half demented with grief, through the loss of all on earth that she cared to live for; and, in addition to this, her brain had been rendered unnatural by the use of opiates.

"Who is Santissima Blanco, that she orders El Orso?"

The Apache chief asked this question in a voice and manner that betrayed the feelings within him, and the "Angel" knew the power that she held over him.

"Santissima Blanco is a daughter of *El Dios Grande*, who has sent her to teach El Orso and his braves many things that they do not know."

"Why did she come in the wheel-lodge? Can she not fly like the eagle?"

"When *El Dios Grande* wills it, she will fly."

"Good. El Orso will go toward the west, but he goes not alone." So saying, and waving his hand to his braves, they at once proceeded to rifle the coach. This they were not long in accomplishing.

Don Diablo was forced to make a flying leap over the hind boot, and Hank Holbrook found himself shaken into consciousness by no gentle hands.

Sitting up and rubbing his eyes, poor Hank cried out:

"Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

As these words reached the ears of Lena Reynolds, she fervently thanked God that He had given her strength and resolution to act as she had done. She would try now and play the game out, if possible, to the bitter end, for the sake of the poor simple couple who had befriended her in the days agone.

Poor Hank Holbrook did not come to himself sufficiently to realize his situation, or the character of those who had bound him fast upon the back of a horse.

Marm Holbrook, when secured in the same way, was so completely paralyzed with fear and horror, she having but come to her senses, that she was speechless; and it was probably as well that she was so.

A rope was tied around Don Diablo's neck, and he was led along, without appearing to care, as his owner would have expressed it, "whether school kept or not."

The plunder of the coach was packed upon extra horses, and when all was at length ready, the chief rode up to Santissima Blanco, saying mildly:

"Come. El Orso will show Apache Land to the daughter of *El Dios Grande*. We go where He calls."

Lena followed the Apache chief, and the braves with their captive came after.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the "Angel," when she found that they were riding up Dead Man's Gulch; and, as she neared her brother's grave, the fortitude which had thus far enabled her to act such a heroic part, in the hope of saving her own and the lives of her old friends, deserted her, and drawing down her black vail, she gave way to her grief.

However, there was no need for veiling her face, as it was dark as Egypt in the gulch.

Only three months before, Lena had ridden up this same dark underground passage, dressed in the buckskin suit of her poor brother, and under the guidance of Giant George, to visit that brother's grave.

What a change! Now she was going toward the same point, held captive by a horde of the most merciless savages in the universe; broken in grief by the loss of all her relatives, with naught to live for except the one hope that she might be able to help those who had been kind to her in that former pilgrimage.

Suddenly, in the midst of her bitterest thoughts, a shot, followed by most blood-curdling yells, broke upon the stillness from the front, and she began to shudder with a new and terrible dread.

Previous to entering Sardine-box City, Lena had traveled so far, and in so rough and primitive a manner, that she had felt the need of sleep, and had taken a powerful opiate, which had brought on a comatose state instead. She had heard all the uproar and commotion that had accompanied the grand *entree* into the burg, but had been unable to move a limb, and it was not until Marm Holbrook sprang upright to leap from the coach that she came to herself. She then saw and recognized her old friend, and, to her horror, saw her fall into the arms of the Apache brave. She saw the fire of the blazing shanties, and recognized the surrounding scenery.

She comprehended the great danger at a glance, in fact, she felt that the fire must have been started to draw away the "citz" from the coach. All the doings and sayings at the boulder had come to her only in a dream-like way: but her brain, now doubly acute, grasped the whole situation on the instant. When El Orso and his braves rode into the opening, she knew that she and her friends were doomed; and hearing the chief pronounce his own name Cuchillo, she conceived the idea of braving the Apaches and working on their superstitious fears, with what success so far the reader knows.

None but a woman of the most powerful will and daring could have stood the ordeal, and the "Angel" could never have done so, had not her mind been in the state in which it was, the powerful drug that she had taken doing its share toward her success.

Lena Reynolds heard the shot and the yell and the terrible whoops that followed it, and the next moment they rode into the basin. There, in the bright moonlight, near her brother's grave, a score of war-painted demons were dancing, circling, howling and brandishing their weapons about the bleeding form of her old friend, Terrif, who stood in their midst, his clothing torn from his body, his face ghastly and bleeding from many wounds, but firm and defiant as of old, although he well knew that death, and a death the most horrible, would soon be his.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOY FOR ARIZONA.

As has been said, the graves of Sam Lawrence and poor Terrif were in a pine *motte*, at the very base of the mountain range. The foliage was of the very densest, and the "citz" led their horses up beneath the branches, when they witnessed the burial of the brave boy who had been beloved by all.

While they were thus standing, Arizona Jack stole out on the north side of the *motte* and looked around in the moonlight to see if an opening offered near them. Nothing met his view over the landscape, and he turned about and gazed upward on the mountain-side. As he did so, his heart suddenly stopped beating, for a sight met his eye that would have been appalling to him a few days previous. All the "citz" were now screened from view by the pines, and working noiselessly.

Crawling along a ledge which led around a spur of the mountain and communicated with the narrow ledge, upon which stood the two small pines of which we have spoken, was a hideous Apache Indian.

He was evidently a rear spy, and had been sent back to see if any parties were following on the trail. Arizona Jack thanked his lucky stars that an opportunity was open to show his skill with a knife—a skill that had already saved him in the burg, and enabled him to send Red Hand over the range.

When Jack had gone up the mountain-side to cut poor Terrif loose, he had noticed that the ledge, upon which grew the two pines, ended abruptly some twenty feet beyond them, and it was with great satisfaction that he now saw the savage proceed toward these trees, and certainly still unaware of the presence of the whites.

The face and brow of this brave were daubed with stripes of white gypsum, the war-paint of the braves of the whole Apache nation, with the exception of the chief.

Upon his breast was an imitation of a crescent moon of the same gypsum, which is plentifully found on the plains. This paint, or what is used as such, causes an Apache to look hideous in the extreme, from the contrast of the ghastly white with the bronzed skin.

He was naked from the waist up, wearing only buckskin leggings and moccasins. His movements were as quick as those of a panther, and like that animal he stole along the ledge, half bent, with a long scalping-knife in his hand. It was not a minute after Arizona Jack had discovered the Apache, that the latter was upon the ledge, approaching the pines, and, although weak from the loss of blood, Jack sprung up the *motte*, and in a moment was at the junction of the two ledges, thus cutting off the Indian, who must needs make a leap of fifty feet down upon the rocks to avoid him.

He well knew that no matter how difficult and dangerous a position he got himself into, his friends could not fire a shot to save him, as that shot would be heard by the Apache war-party; and, if it did not endanger the lives of the captives, would at least put the Indians on their guard, and cause them to take measures

to prevent being trailed, and thus it would be impossible to effect the rescue of their friends.

Jack drew his long bowie, and proceeded slowly around to the spur of the rock. One step more would betray his presence to the war-painted fiend.

He peeped around the adamantine point, and saw that the Indian was now between the two pines, and gazing downward, with all the astonishment that an Indian ever shows, upon the scene at the grave.

As he stood thus, the "citz" mounted their horses, and spurred out beyond the screen of branches, followed by Tom Jones and Giant George; a sight that caused the Apache to leap aside to prevent being discovered.

Missing Jack from their ranks, and seeing his horse still secured to a tree, Giant George and Tom halted.

At this moment, Jack stepped around the spur of rock, and this movement drew the eyes of all upon him. They gazed in wonder, as their new-found pard threw his hat to the ledge at his feet, and taking off his belt and six-shooters, laid them upon the hat.

George, the sheriff, and the "citz," all thought Jack had gone crazy, and was about to throw himself from the rocky height, but they dared not cry out to him.

All watched intently this strange proceeding, the Indian being securely hidden from their view in the pine, and trembling with apprehension, as he saw the gaze of the whites directed toward his covert.

Jack replaced his belt, and drew it up a hole tighter than usual; then he rolled up his sleeves to the elbows, which still more astonished the spectators. What their strange pard was about to do, they were at a loss to decide. However, they were not destined to be kept long in suspense; for the young man stepped lightly toward and past the first pine, taking his position within five feet of the same, then with bowie-knife between his teeth, he grasped a large stone in either hand, and hurled one after the other, with great force, into the pine where the Apache brave was crouched.

It would be difficult to say whether the Indian or the "citz" were the most amazed. The former, however, realized at once that he was trapped, for he could not see the termination of the ledge from his position. Filled with mad frenzy, and determined to die with knife in hand, if die he must, he sprung out, and confronted his foe.

Half bent, with knives clutched tightly in their hands, their muscles braced for the deadly conflict, white and red gazed into each other's eyes, the moonlight falling upon them.

A deep groan came from the throat of every one who watched them from below. It was a dread, a terrible, and yet a grand tragical sight to look upon. All held their breath, for even a misstep on that rocky ledge must hurl a man down the canyon, a mangled corpse.

Like two panthers, crouching and clawing the earth previous to engaging in combat, each measuring the strength, and studying the eye of the other, these men stood thus on the threshold of death; for, should one allow the other to clutch him, and a struggle ensue, both must fall to the rocks below. There was no safety for either, unless he kept the other from grappling with him; and Giant George and the "citz" judged, from the character of his tribe, that the Apache intended to close in, and hurl himself and his opponent to death, for he must know that he was doomed in any event, even if he came off victor in the conflict that impended.

There was only a moment's pause, and then each stepped forward, Arizona Jack drawing himself erect, and lowering his knife to his side, leaving his breast exposed.

This movement so surprised the Indian that it probably lessened his guard, and caused him to be less on the alert.

He instantly lunged forward, and it was not until the point of his long scalping-knife was within three inches of his enemy's breast, that the latter moved a muscle. Then, by a quick movement, his bowie shot side-ways, piercing the wrist of the Apache, whose knife dropped with a clang on the rock as he sprung back; for Jack's arm was now straight as a bar of iron, the point of his knife preventing the brave from closing in without insuring certain death.

A low, but deep and meaning cheer arose from the overjoyed "citz," for the Indian was now plainly at the mercy of their pard, Arizona Jack.

Straightening his sinewy form, and folding his arms, the Apache, gazing skyward, awaited his death-blow to all appearance unresistingly;

but those below knew that, with the advance of Jack, he would spring upon the latter, and bound off the ledge to his death, taking his hated white enemy with him. To the surprise and amazement of the "citz," and to their indignation as well, Jack coolly picked up the knife of the Indian, and threw it back at his feet. If the spectators were astonished, the Apache was doubtless more so, but he gave no evidence of it. Stooping down, he grasped his knife, and then, even before he arose to an erect posture, he made a desperate bound, thinking to take Jack unawares.

Never was a red-man more mistaken; for Jack, by a dexterous play of steel, severed the muscles of the Apache's arm, the instant after parrying his wild thrust, and then, with one terrible sweep of his bowie, laid open the abdomen of his foe from side to side.

A wild cheer of joy arose to Jack's ears, followed by ejaculations of relief, of approbation, and astonishment.

The iron-knit frame of the burly brave now swayed and quivered, as the blood flowed in torrents from his fearful gaping wound. Then he sunk down on the rocky shelf, his snaky eyes still fixed upon his enemy. Thus kneeling upon his knees, he gathered his entire remaining strength, and hurled his knife with terrific force directly at his slayer; but Jack, interpreting aright the intention of the Indian, fell forward flat upon the rocky ledge, and the glittering steel flew over, and far beyond him.

The Apache reeled this way and that, clinging with desperation to the rough portions of the rock; then, by a superhuman effort, he again arose to his feet, and opened his mouth for a signal whoop, but ere a sound could come from his lips, a huge stone, hurled by Arizona Jack, struck him full in the forehead, and he fell, with a death-yell sounding from his throat with horrible intonation, first to the ledge, then toppled over, clutching wildly, but without success, at the outer edge of the rugged rock, and down through the air he went flying, crashing through the pines, and striking and tearing the branches!

The "citz" heard the sickening sound, as the body struck the floor of the gulch; and riding into the *motte*, Giant George saw that the mangled corpse of the murderous Apache lay directly across the graves of Sam Lawrence and Terrif!

This was indeed retribution!

Dead Man's Gulch should be renamed, and called Dead Men's Gulch, or the Gulch of Dead Men.

The giant scout sprung from his horse, and by a few dexterous cuts tore off the entire scalp, including the ears, from the Apache, around whose body was a coil of lariat of the most intricate make, formed of eight strands of buffalo calf-skin.

No sooner did Giant George discover this, than he grasped the Indian by the leg, and "yanked" the carcass out from the *motte* into the broad moonlit basin, where the "citz" now sat upon their horses, conversing in low tones, and all massed together; their conversation bearing upon the most marvelous skill and endurance, as well as bravery, of Arizona Jack, who had put them all to shame by his discovery of the red spy.

Had Jack not seen the Apache, and had the latter returned to report to his chief the presence of such a force on his trail, all efforts they might have henceforth made toward the rescue of the captives would have proved futile. Clearly, Jack was the coming man.

Strange scenes had been enacted in that natural amphitheater. Strange, tragic scenes by moonlight—scenes that would wring the heart, and torture the brain of an observer, and Dead Man's Gulch seemed destined to become historical.

Tom Jones no sooner saw the Indian fall from the ledge, than he sprung from his horse, and passing the loose lariat to one of the "citz," he ran around the *motte*, and up the mountain path, to meet and congratulate the champion, Arizona Jack.

Giant George, after dragging the dead Apache out into the moonlight, stood, with the scalp in his hand, looking up toward the ledge. The "citz," after bestowing one glance upon the corpse, also directed their gaze at the same point; Arizona Jack being the object of attention and interest with them all.

To the surprise of the observers, the young man was coolly tugging at a knot at the base of one of the pines, endeavoring to secure part of one of the lariats by which Terrif had been suspended.

"Wa-al," cried out the burly scout, in the

utmost astonishment; "yer kin chaw me up, an' spit me out fer catfish bait, ef that new-borned scout ain't ther most unconscarned, cool, peart, brash, chuck-full-o'-sand steel-slinger I ever run ag'in' since I struck dirt on this yere yearth! He hes done more by this ter bring me down ter ginawine trailin' biz, than I thort ary man in Arizone c'u'd do. I war 'bout crazy a-thinkin' o' ther fix o' ther Angel, an' hit hed 'bout sp'iled me fer biz. Now, I'm ready ag'in ter take advantage o' chain-lightnin'."

As the giant scout thus spoke, Jack, having secured the lariat, coiled the same, and replacing his six-shooters in his belt, returned his hat to his head, and greeting Tom Jones, who at that moment joined him, both came down among the assembled "citz."

"Arizone Jack," spoke up Giant George; "gi'n us yer paw! An' I'll sw'ar I'm dog-goned glad an' proud ter shake hit, fer yer ez white an' brave a man es I wants ter pard with; an' ler prove hit, hyer's ther sculp o' that condemned red cuss, which I hes tuck off fer yer myself, an' that air perrarer proof of ther greatest frien'ship. I don't know another man in Arizone, that I'd do more fer. Tom Jones, jist 'zamine that scarifyer's paws, an' tell me ef yer knows who be air. 'Pears ter me he air familiar like."

Tom did as directed, and all saw that the hands of the Indian were hard and calloused, certain parts of the flesh between the fingers being hard, and smooth as ivory.

"C'u'dn't say, pard," said Tom, "who he air, by ther paws, though by ther mark over ther bestest biz'ness part o' his 'natermy, I shu'd say his cog' war Quarter-Moon."

"Feller pard," exclaimed the giant scout, "hit's El Ropa, the bestest lariat braider in ther 'Pache nation; an' he tied ther ropes 'roun' poor Terrif. Jack hev done a heap this night fer Arizone, since he tuck ther war-path, an' jist fer a beginnin'. An' more'n that, he kin sling a knife like a circus man, dang'd ef he can't!"

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE TRAIL.

ARIZONA JACK took the scalp of El Ropa gingerly, and advancing to the *motte*, hung it on a limb, saying:

"Greatly obliged to you, pard George; but I don't care to pack the infernal thing. I'll hang it here to dry, and perhaps if I retain my own scalp, and return this way, I'll send it to Bill Cody, to hang beside the hair of Yellow Hand the Sioux, whose head Bill skinned with such satisfaction, when he thought of the gallant Custer.

"How kim yer ter freeze yer peepers onter ther cuss," asked Giant George; "an' 'bout how war he actin'?"

"He came around the spur by a narrow ledge, which meets and joins the one upon which we had our pic-nic," was the answer; "and he came very cautiously. It was lucky that all were hidden by the pines, or he would have seen some of us without being himself observed; and then he would have returned to the war-party, and it would have been all up with the captives, and perhaps with ourselves too."

"Look a hyer," broke in Tom Jones; "Jack, I'm dang'd ef I b'lieve yer ever war a tender-foot. Yer war borned brash. What's yer ruminatin' 'bout, George?"

"I war rollin' over in my brain-box what pard Jack hes spit out 'bout that red. Ther cuss come from ther gap, an' hit looks es though ther perrarer pirates hed tuck ter ther rocks o' ther range ther way El Roper acted. Ef ther sun would come we'd be O. K. I dar-sen't think o' ther 'Angel,' er I'd go plum hyderfobic. Yer see, boyees, Mrs. Reynolds, that's her affidavy cog', she w'u'dn't 'low me ter let yer know she war in ther hearse; 'cos why? She wanted ter gi'n a surprise party ter ther hull burg, ter-morrer, in ther canyon, an' so—"

"Hark!"

The interruption came from Arizona Jack, who seemed ever on the alert, and who now drew his revolvers, and urged his horse toward the chasm that led into the basin. Halt-ing within twenty paces of one side of the dark outlet of Dead Man's Gulch, Jack sat his horse, with both "sixes" presented.

All were now listening most intently, and now and then they could hear the click of a hoof against a stone.

Not long had they thus to wait; for, out from the darkness broke the head of Don Diablo, who halted a moment, gazed around in usual free-and-easy manner, passed among the "citz," and directly up to his master.

All were not a little surprised, for the burro

was supposed to be either loafing among the cacti about Sardine-box City, being deemed useless plunder by the Apaches, or with the war-party. With a cry of joy, Giant George hastily dismounted, and ran up to welcome his grotesque pet, who received it all in his most matter-of-fact indifferent manner.

The eyes of Arizona Jack were fixed from the first upon the strange brute, about which so much had been told him, when suddenly he noticed around one of the animal's fore-legs, a band of buckskin.

Springing from his horse, Jack slipped out his knife, and cut the band loose, taking from beneath the same, a neatly-folded note.

"Wa-al, dang my cats!" said Giant George. "Jack air a-beatin' us ole hands every time. Don Diablo hes turned hisself over ter ther Pony Express. Whoop! Boyees," here the scout fairly leaped into the air; "ef we'uns hasn't gut a William-dux from ther Angel! I feels hit! I knows hit! I'll take my affidavy on hit!" Here he closed with Tom Jones, lifted the latter upon his shoulder, and ran around the basin, to the great amusement of all the "citz," who now dismounted and circled about Arizona Jack.

At the request of Giant George, who now returned, after having set Tom Jones astride of Don Diablo, a little attention which the latter did not deign to notice, the note was now opened by Arizona Jack, and read aloud:

"CAMP OF EL ORSO, THE CHIEF OF THE APACHES.

"MY DEAR FRIEND GIANT GEORGE:

"We were surprised at the coach, where you so imprudently left us, and Hank, Mrs. Holbrook, Don Diablo and myself made captives; although I laid out a plan before the Indians saw me, and sprung from the coach, ordering the chief to get me a horse, bidding him proceed to the west, and proclaiming myself as Santissima Blanco, sent by *El Dios Grande* to teach the Apaches 'big medicine.' I formed this plan in an instant, as the only way by which I could hope to save my life, and the lives of the Holbrooks. I have so far succeeded admirably. The inhuman fiends captured Terrif in Dead Man's Gulch, and I fear tortured him. I was forced either to return to the canyon, or to shake the faith of the Indians in my assumed character. They were insane with fury, in regard to the killing of Red Hand, and demanded a victim. Had not poor Terrif been fallen in with, I am confident the Holbrooks would both have been tortured. Still, I hope he has escaped, but I fear not.

"I shall send our faithful Don Diablo on the back trail with this, when I am not noticed, and I do hope and pray that it may fall into your hands. Do nothing rash, I implore you; for, if you charge the camp, we shall all be butchered. There are some who, I believe, suspect that I am not what I pretend; and they would shoot me in case of attack. Hank is in a state of lunacy, from drink and fear combined, and poor Mrs. Holbrook is not much better. She does not know me, and seems to regard me much as the Indians do. It helps me, although I long, ever so much, to speak to the poor soul, and comfort her.

"We travel west, and encamp in the foot-hills. This much I have learned from El Orso, who so far has treated me with respect. I am my own mistress, and have free control of my actions. I may get a chance to dose the braves, or a part of them, with some powerful drugs, which luckily I have with me.

"We may never meet again, my kind friend, but if not, that God may bless Giant George, and the citizens of Sardine-box City, shall be the last prayer of

LENA REYNOLDS, nee LAWRENCE.

"Whoop me up!" exclaimed the giant scout, as Jack folded the note, and passed it to him, he carefully placing it in his bullet-pouch. "Whoop me up! Kick me good! Low me ter lay down, and all on yer gallop over me. Hitch a lariat 'roun' each o' my big toes, and drag me through Dead Man's Gulch, clean ter ther canyon! Somebody that's hefty, set on my head, fer hit's a-bu'stin'. Ther mersheenery in ther best part o' my natermy air runnin' et stampede speed, an' bout ter crack my ribs! Dang my great-grandmother's bestest cat's littlest kittens, ef ther 'Angel' ain't pulled wool over El Orso, ther dang'dest ha'r clawer north o' ther Bravo! Boyees, we hes gut a dead sure thing, ef we plays our p'ints fine, er I'm a bug-eatin' Piute; dog-goned ef we hain't!"

As Giant George ceased speaking, he caught the corpse of El Ropa by the ankles, and swung the horrible thing around his head; then launched it through the air, down into a deep chasm of the basin.

"Reckon he's planted so dang'd deep now, he'll never come up, pard George," said the sheriff; "an' I'm teetotally bamfoozed ef we wants another crap o' sich varmints. What's nex' on ther programme, pard?"

"Arizone Jack!" exclaimed George; "whar in thunder air yer now? Huntin' fer somethin' fresh ter slash yer knife inter? I'm a dog goned, dod-blasted liar ef I doesn't b'lieve that yer marm gi'n yer a knife ter play with,

an' yer used hit 'stid o' a spoon from the fust. Come this-a-ways, Jack; I hes somethin' ter say."

Jack rode around the *motte*, where he had been watching the rocky ledge, thinking that possibly another Apache might put in an appearance before they left.

"Well, pard George, what can I do for the common good?"

"Hes yer gut ary a pencil an' paper along o' yer?"

"Yes, old man; I have both in my saddle-bags."

"Will yer writ a few words ter ther 'Angel'?"

"Certainly I will; but who will take the note to her?"

"Why, Don Diablo, in co'rse! Who else?"

"Will that animal go back to the Apache camp?"

"I'm a-bettin' my horse ag'in' a cotton-tailed rabbit that he glides straight es a line back ter ther 'Angel'."

"If he does, he is worth his weight in gold."

"Thet's whar yer is sizin' him down ter 'bout his half-vally. He hes panned out more'n his weight in dust, in good, honest, servise, an' in savin' white bleed. Thet air, he hes saved, er he's been the means o' savin' ther life o' his pard—that's me—an' ther 'Ang'l.' I would a' been sent ter kingdom come on the whiz, an' ther 'Ang'l' would a' bin in ther power o' El Capitan, ther chief o' ther Panthers, ef Don Diablo hedn't a-chipped in ther game, an' made all ther p'ints yer c'u'd git outen ther keards. But jist you sling a few words ter let ther 'Ang'l' know we air a-comin' on, workin' our way kinder sly, to save 'em."

Arizona Jack quickly complied, as well as he could by moonlight, and the note was secured to Don Diablo's leg in the same manner as the other had been. This was done by Giant George, who talked to the burro during the time he was binding the buckskin, as if the little brute understood it all.

"Now, Don, ole boyee," he said, "I wants yer ter show yer raisin'. Yer knows dog-goned well that ther 'Paches don't keer a conterntal fer yer sculp, fer they sees yer hasn't put much ha'r on yer kerbase—'cos why? Yer allus run ter ears. No matter how much mesquite grass yer spiles, hit doesn't put a ounce o' meat on yer ribs till yer ears gits plump an' shiny. But, never yer mind, Don; ef we gits ther 'Ang'l', outen this scrape, we'll be hunk; an' I promise yer long feed, an' plenty o' time ter chaw hit."

The burro projected one hind leg out slowly until it was as straight as a gun barrel, to stretch his muscles; he then elevated his head until his nose pointed to the moon, and was on a level with his neck, his ears lying flat on either side. At the same time he curled his lip, displaying his teeth, and snuffing the air. Then he dropped his head suddenly, and shook it from side to side, with an expression of seeming disgust.

"See hyer, Don," added the giant scout, "yer needn't ter act that away, fer I sw'ar I'm talkin' solid hoss sense, an' means every word I spit out. I know yer hes bin madder'n a hatter ever since I tuck yer ter civilize, whar yer c'u'dn't git a smell o' bracky water, er stick yer nose full o' prickly pear thorns: but I'll never do hit ag'in. I sw'ar I'll never buckle yer inter another stage boot. I war es sick when I war in civilize myself es a hen with ther pip; an' we wou'dn't a-gone, only fer ter please ther 'Ang'l', an' now she's bin tuck by ther 'Paches, all outen that jim-jamboree biz. We'll lock her up when we gits on another racket. But we hes gut ter git her fust afore we kin do that; an' yer hes gut ter play another keard in ther game. Thar," rising to his feet, "I've fixed ther William-dux so hit'll glide through, pervidin' yer go with hit. Boyees, ther Uncle Samuel's mail air 'bout ter skute up ther range. Come an' say 'by-by' ter Don Diablo."

The "citz," who had dismounted, and were standing near, watching the strange pair, all patted the burro on the head; but the beast seemed to have sunk into a half sleep, standing listlessly, with lowered head and drooping ears. All wondered what next.

"The burro won't go a peg to ward the Apache camp," asserted Arizona Jack. "He likes to hear you talk too well to le 'e you, pard George."

"Don't yer go more'n half ye pile on that, Jack, I vises yer. Hyer, Don, that's a heap o' biz ahead."

As he said this, the giant scout stooped, and put his mouth to the burro's ear. He then said:

"Skute, slide, glide, levant; git up an' git; peramberiate back ter ther 'Ang'l' es quick es ver little huffs kin tote yer without gittin' too flusterated. Whoop her up, Don Diablo! an' we'll foller, quick meter, an' clean out El Orso's scariifers!"

No sooner had Giant George gotten off another "Whoop her up!" with a stronger emphasis than the preceding, than the burro started briskly off, although his head kept shaking, as if loth to go, and the next moment he had disappeared in the gloom of Dead Man's Gulch.

"Well, that beats everything I ever saw in my life," admitted Arizona Jack, in pure astonishment. "The poor brute is beat out now, and hasn't had a single chance to feed since its ride in that coach."

"An' thar warn't much grass growin' on top o' thér 'barse' either," put in Tom Jones. "But mebbe so he's chawed off Hank's coat collar. Why, Jack, let me tell yer, Don Diablo kin live on futur' prospec's fer a week. Stan' him on a rock, five miles from grass, an' he'll git along fust-rate by jist takin' a squint in the direction of hit 'bout one't an hour, an' jist smellin' o' thér air from thér perrarer 'bout onc't in two hours."

"Jump yer critters, boyees, an' let's glide toward thér perrarers," ordered Giant George. "Come, Jack an' Tom, we moughtes well move on, though we can't 'spect ter do much good until we gits a show at 'em when they camp. Ef we knowed jist whar thér cusses war located, we'd stand a show ter skute in on 'em afore mornin'; but hit's dangerous ter thér captives fer us ter shake ourselves roun' too much. Howsomever, we can't do nothin' hyer, an' I allus hes thér blues when I'm in Dead Man's Gulch, fer I tuck keer o' Sam Lawrence, thér 'Ang'l's' brother, ontill he went over thér range. An' now hit's a heap wuss, since thér boy Terrif war called in sich a onhuman way."

"Hold! For the love of God, hold! What is that, or who is that, on the dark line at the entrance of the gulch?"

Thus called out Arizona Jack, in a voice in which amazement was mingled with horror.

CHAPTER X.

AT DEAD MAN'S GULCH.

FILLED with terror and anguish, Lena Reynolds watched poor Terrif in the midst of the yelling, dancing horde of savages. She dared not interfere with the fiends, for they might turn and rend her, torture the Holbrooks, or do anything in their fury.

She felt that the boy was doomed, that no earthly power could save that true and honest heart; but she was given an avenue of escape from witnessing the horrible scene further, by the chief, El Orso, who now rode up to her, saying:

"Santissima Blanco will ride back to the canyon. She is big medicine. She must not come where the Bad Spirit lives. The Bad Spirit is here, and he is stronger than the Good Spirit. El Orso has spoken."

Back she rode into the darkness of the gulch, and then down toward the canyon. Upon reaching the latter, which at this point was quite wide, and lighted up by the moon, she was surprised to find herself alone, none of the Indians having attended her. If she wished, she could now ride at headlong speed toward Sardine-box City and escape; but she could not desert the friends, now so helpless, when it was still possible for her to aid in saving their lives.

Alone though she was, she felt confident that El Orso was only trying her; that he had a spy or spies watching her every movement, and she knew that by making no attempt to escape, but remaining thus unguarded, her power would be greatly increased.

Suddenly a piercing cry of anguish shot through the air from Dead Man's Gulch, and she stopped her ears, for well she knew whence it proceeded.

"Oh, God!" she cried, from her inmost soul; "why dost thou allow such misery to come upon thy children? What have I done, that all this should come upon me? What have I done that thou hast taken from me, in one fell swoop all that I prized, and left me to wander cheerless and miserable until savage hands drag me to despair and death, or a fate far worse? Oh, give me strength to bear up under this most cruel ordeal! Give me strength to practice the teachings of Thy Blessed Son, and like Him, suffer and endure for others!"

The silvery moon played about the kneeling form of that agonized being, who seemed too fair and frail for earth. But that same silvery and placid orb of night shone down upon a

hellish scene, not three rifle-shots away. It shone down to light a horde of painted fiends in their savage, dastard work of torture,—shone down upon a sight that would make man regret his form and senses, for the reason that in these he resembled these demons.

Poor Terrif had been out on the mountain, on one of his solitary rides, and was whistling merrily as he came through the gap. The character of the young *raquero* can be summed up in five brief words—he was happy when alone.

Quickly he had dismounted, and ran into the motte, where he stood meditating by the grave of Sam Lawrence, a spot which he never passed without pausing.

The Apaches, coming silently into the basin caught sight of the saddled horse standing in the margin of the pines, and soon they were upon their unsuspecting victim, who was soon disarmed and dragged out into the moonlit space, struggling manfully.

Terrif was strong, and had a frame of iron, but in such an unequal contest he was soon vanquished. The scene that followed would send a chill of horror to the stoutest heart, even in description.

At an order from El Orso, a brave sprung to the debris at the foot of the basin, where grew in profusion the gorgeous Spanish dagger plant.

Quickly the Apache cut numbers of the sharp lance-like leaves, wherewith to add to the torture, and hastening back the fiendish dance began. The dance was kept up, but the brave victim remained silent amid all his agonies, until at length El Orso sprung from the demoniac circle, and whirling his knife around the shapely head with its crown of clustering curls, tore off the reeking scalp from the living victim. Then, and not till then, broke one long-drawn cry of hopeless agony and terrible despair from the lips of the brave youth.

This was followed by his being suspended in the manner in which he was discovered by Giant George and his party. No pen could possibly portray a tithe of the horrors the poor boy had then to endure. No imagination can picture them.

But God kindly took away all sense of suffering from him, as his eyes were dug from their sockets, after he had passed through tortures sufficient to have killed numbers of men with less vitality, and less power of endurance.

There, suspended upon the mountain side, swaying, and galled against the rough rocks, his head downward, his skin, where it was stained with the dripping gore, ghastly white, his sightless eyes hanging by the muscles over his forehead his warm life-blood falling, drop by drop, down through the pine foliage upon the grass at the head of Sam Lawrence's grave—there the cowardly butchers left poor Terrif, but only when they believed him to be dead. Better, far better for him, had he been dead, and so past the most terrible suffering yet to come, rather than to linger on in his dying agonies.

Thus they left him, with a farewell exultant whoop, as vaulting upon their half-wild steeds, they cast their snake-like eyes up the mountain side, gloatingly, and then dashed into the darkness of Dead Man's Gulch.

Lena Reynolds sat near the thicket, bowed down with grief and anguish indescribable, and incomprehensible to any one except herself. That one agonizing shriek of the tortured youth had pierced her already grief-stricken soul, and placed her on a rack of torture.

She had arrived at a correct conclusion in regard to the probable espionage which El Orso would set upon her; for, at the point where the gulch and canyon met, amid the hill-mesquites, and upon the very brink of the steep, lay at full length an Apache brave, his glittering eyes glaring down upon her like the orbs of a hideous basilisk.

But these snake-like eyes, keen as they were, saw not the supple, willowy form that wound its serpentine course along beneath the mesquites, and down the land-slide toward the point where Lena Reynolds sat.

The form was that of a woman—a woman with a wild, insane look in her black, piercing eyes, that spoke of anguish and agony long endured, as did also the high cheek-bones, almost devoid of flesh, the sharp chin, and the bony arms. Her complexion had been white and fair, but was now sunburnt and fearfully scratched, and her hair, black as night was wild and tangled, hanging below her waist, and with burrs and thorns entangled in its meshes.

That she was a Mexican-born Castilian was very evident; the most casual observer, if acquainted with the bearing and appearance of

the women of Montezuma Land, would recognize the fact at a glance, and also that she belonged to the higher class of dames.

Not only did the intelligent look in her eyes, wild though they were, betray her true condition, but her apparel, although torn almost to shreds and much soiled, was of the finest silk, while in her red sash was thrust a gold-handled stiletto and a pair of Spanish dueling pistols of the finest workmanship. Her shoes had been long since worn out, and pieces of buckskin were clumsily bound about her small and aristocratic feet, with their high-arched insteps.

Cautiously she crawled until within a few feet of Lena Reynolds; then she spoke, in the figurative language of her people on the frontiers of Mexico:

"Senora, with the face of snow, sit still and hear me. Turn not your head toward me, for the eyes of an Apache watch you from the gulch."

"I am Warnitta, the Wild; that is what they have called me at Tucson ever since El Orso stole my child—my own, my beautiful Marietta! The prairies and the mountains have known my footsteps where I have wandered in search of my child, and of vengeance. My Marietta sits weeping in the lodge of an Apache, but one hour's ride up the range.

"The squaws come there from down the Gila. They await their chief, and he, El Orso, now tortures a white man by the side of the mountain. Warnitta will kill him, and recover her child; but she wants help. Why does not the snow-faced senora fly to her friends? Her horse is fleet, and the canyon is smooth. Warnitta has eaten no food for two days, for she is on El Orso's trail, and he might escape her. When the owl hoots at night, Warnitta's eyes are open. When the sun comes, and when the sun goes, she is on the trail of El Orso.

"His red cheek shall pale, when the stiletto of Warnitta flashes in his eyes. Warnitta has seen that the snow-faced Senora rides with no bonds. Why is it so?"

Lena was so dazed by anguish and grief, that even the voice breaking upon her ears, so strongly intonated, and at a time and place so unexpected, did not cause her to turn her head; although she would probably have done so, had not the words of her visitor warned her of the Apache spy.

"Snow Face, as you call me, has told the Apache Chief that she is Santissima Blanco, sent by *El Dios Grande* to teach big medicine to his people. They believe me, and I will aid you in regaining your daughter, if I can. Two of my friends are captives to El Orso, and I stay in order that I may save them if possible. It is a friend of mine who is now being tortured, but I cannot save him without sacrificing myself and the two who are now in the gulch, and under guard. Will Senora Warnitta follow the canyon, or will she hide here until my friends from the town below march to rescue us, and then guide them to the Apache village?"

"Warnitta will wait. She will guide the friends of Snow Face when they come. But she must sleep now. When the owl's noon-time comes, Warnitta is wild. Her head grows hot, and the spirits call to her from the sky. She is wild then, because the wrongs of her child torture her brain. Snow Face will see my Marietta. She will kiss her, and Warnitta will kiss the ground that Snow Face treads. Hark! El Orso, the thief, El Orso, who stole my child, my beauty, my Marietta—comes. I hear him. Holy Mary! Stay my hand until my stiletto is sure of his heart. *Adios*, Snow Face. *El Dios Grande* protect you!"

With these words, the strange, wild-looking being crawled away from Lena Reynolds, further back among the thick mesquites.

A moment more, and El Orso and his braves galloped up with exultant yells, and blood-stained hands and knives, out from the black mouth of Dead Man's Gulch.

CHAPTER XI.

A STRANGE DUEL.

THE eyes of all were turned quickly, as Arizona Jack spoke, toward the dark opening of the gulch, at the entrance to the basin.

There, half in light, half in darkness, was a wild, fierce-looking mustang, its head elevated, its eyes glaring like two coals of fire, its ears laid back viciously upon its abundance of tangled, wide flowing mane, its nostrils distended—in fact, in a position of sudden alarm, seeming undecided whether to advance, and tear, with its fully displayed teeth, those that barred its way, or to whirl and bound back into the darkness of the gulch.

That this latter movement depended not upon

Itself alone was, however, plain to be seen; for, upon the back of the mustang, sitting astride, was Warnitta the Wild, as the Tucson people had named her, from the fact that the loss of her child, while visiting at a distant rancho, had caused her to run wild in the streets for days, and at last to suddenly disappear from her now desolate home.

It was now midnight; the hour at which, as she had informed Lena Reynolds, she was really wild. It would be difficult to conceive of a more close resemblance between a woman and a horse than was now presented to the eyes of the observers. The wild, flowing, tangled mane of the animal corresponded with the long hair of his rider, which was in much the same sadly unkempt condition.

The fiery eyes of the horse, the poise of the head, the vicious curl of the lip away from the set teeth, the defiance blended with hesitation, and an inclination to plunge back into the dark gorge, were present in both mustang and rider.

But a moment, however, did this strange, uncanny pair remain stationary; for, with a piercing cry of blended exultation and satisfaction, with the intonation of which the unmistakable signs of insanity could be detected, Warnitta whirled her quirt in the air and brought it down hissing about the hams of the mustang. With a loud snort, the startled animal sprung forward, throwing its head down to the earth, until its nose almost touched its fast flying fore-hoofs, and shaking it vigorously and viciously, in spite of the tight jaw strap held by the woman, who bent her whole weight upon it, at the same time leaning backward until the tangled masses of her midnight hair mingled with the bushy tail of her steed—the one scarce distinguishable from the other.

Amazement the most profound ruled all, including even Giant George, and not a word broke from their lips as this mad horse with its equally mad rider, galloped into their midst, and halted just in front of the burly scout.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the woman, wildly. "Warnitta the Wild has you now! She has you all corralled in the gulch. Why do the friends of Snow Face sit their mustangs and gaze at the moon, when blood is in her trail? Does the shepherd hide in his hut, when wolves are carrying away his sheep? Where is the white skinned youth that El Orso hung on the rocks? Have the buzzards picked his bones so soon, and the wolves gnawed the lariats loose? *Madre de Dios!*"—stopping her ears with her fingers—"his shriek cut my brain like a knife, and I crawled like a snake through the bushes to tell the Snow Face. Hark! Hear the owls hoot! They mock me, for they know I am mad. Woe to El Orso, did I meet him now! Were there a thousand braves at his back, I'd claw his heart out and throw it to the wolves! Do you hear me? Yes, to the wolves! For he stole my child, my beautiful Marietta, whom the Virgin smiled upon.

"His fingers have dabbled in blood, but not in hers, or *El Dios* would strike him dead. He has not seen her since he stole her from me, for he sent her by some of his braves to the far away village. Had I known it then, I would have followed them, instead of him.

"Over prairies and mountains, through canyon and gulch, I have been on his track, and now, both my child and my revenge are within my grasp. The squaws have come to me: El Orso. They have my child, but I woud not tear her from them until I had killed him. The red fiend, the painted devil, I will scalp him alive, as he did the fair boy just a little while ago! Snow Face has made him afraid. He thinks she came from *El Dios Grande*. Perhaps she did. My Marietta came from *El Madre de Dios*, and she must go back unstained. Blood must flow in the Apache camp—red blood, rivers of blood! Death yells must scare the owls to-night, before the sun comes. Do you hear? To-night! Warnitta will lead you to the Apache village. When they sleep we will steal our friends; and then, *blood, blood!*"

As the poor, crazed being uttered the last word, she reeled in her saddle and woud have fallen to the rocky bed of the gulch, but for Arizona Jack, who sprung from his horse and caught her just as Giant George grasped the jaw-strap of her mustang and held him fast.

"Boys!" exclaimed Jack; "the poor creature is starving. I saw that as soon as she rode up. Pass me a canteen of water and then shake out some grub for her."

"Dog-gone my bestest bizness merchine!" said George. "I never war quite so sot back afore. She air ther dangdest, skeeriest piece o' caliker I ever run ag'in; but I'm a-takin' my addavy that she's talkin' straight an' squar',

clean through. Fotch her 'roun' ter biz, Jack, an' we'll fodder her up, an' then skute. Ef she ain't a boss scout, I'll swaller a turkey-buzzard on ther wing."

"You think what she says can be depended on?" said Jack.

"I'm a-bettin' on hit. They hes bin on a len'thy ole trail, 'es this byer female woman says, when they strikes ther squaws what's come down ter meet 'em, they'll shove 'em on duty es guards, an' ther bucks 'll take a double-barrel'd snooze. Thet 'll gi'n us a show ter glide in. Ef ther cusses stole this hyer woman's leetle gal, why we-'uns 'll stan' by her till the last gun's fired. She's bin through Tophet with ther brimstone counted in, yer kin all see. Thar's a heap o' misery shoved inter Arizone, an' hit ain't all located in Sardine-box City, though I used ter s'pose so."

"Tom Jones, don't stan' thar a-gapin', but shove out some grub. Warnitta shill hev ther bestest we hes gut."

The poor, half-demented woman opened her glassy eyes, that still glowed with insane light, and looked upon the rough but sympathetic faces around her for a moment. Then she shook off the supporting arm of Arizona Jack, and sat upright. Tom Jones passed her a canteen of water, of which she drank a long draught, and then, as food was given her, she tore and devoured it like a famished wolf, swallowing it without mastication.

At last her hunger was satisfied, and she arose to her feet, apparently much refreshed, and swinging her long, bony arms about her head, she cried out:

"Come! Marietta is in El Orso's camp. Snow Face is in El Orso's camp. The little man and woman are in El Orso's camp. We must steal them away and hide them in the bushes. Then I will play with the scalp and heart of the Apache chief. Warnitta will wash her hands in his blood. She will spit in his face. She will laugh in his ears when his breath grows short and his eyes are dim from looking at the fire that is before him. Come! Warnitta will guide the white braves of the North into the village of El Orso!"

With these words, the strange being mounted her wild mustang, which tore around the basin with the speed of the wind before she could subdue and control its movements. Then she darted, with a piercing cry, into the gloom and blackness of Dead Man's Gulch.

"By ther t'arin' terrantaler o' Taos!" cried out the giant scout; "ef she goes hit thet way, she won't be wo'th shucks on ther trail, an' ther 'Paches 'll know we air a-comin' 'fore we gits within five mile o' the camp! She's a reg'lar panther cat, an' her hoss fits her ter a dot, dang'd ef he don't. Wonder if ther 'Paches stole hit's colt, an' hit's run wild on 'count o' hit. Ef El Orso runs ag'in' her, he'll think he's struck a hurrar's nest, er I air a liar!"

"She's got more sense than you give her credit for," asserted Jack, as they passed along the bed of the dark gulch. "She knows the exact position of the camp, and you will see she will be as shy as a fox when there is need of it, or I'm greatly mistaken. I'd risk a great deal on her 'say so,' wild as she is; and Marietta has got to come out of that camp to-night, or I'll crawl into a coyote hole, and say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' and then give my last farewell kick."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the scout. "Hit 'pears ter me yer is gittin' soft on ther leetle gal afore yer hes see'd her. Hit can't be thet yer hes fall'd in love with her from ther opin' yer hes panned out from seein' her mother!"

"I'm a long way from being in love with anybody, pard George," said the young man briskly, "but I have a heap of sympathy for any one that is in the power of those red devils. Do you think the 'Angel' safe, that you are in such excellent spirit all at once?"

"Ya-as," was the decided reply. "Ef she bes bamboozled 'em from ther start, es she writ, an' es Warnitta says, you kin bet ther red cusses thinks she air from t'other world, an' they wouldn't hurt her for fear o' famine, an' plague, an' pestilence, an' ther Lord knows what, fallin' on thar tribe."

"And how about the others—Holbrook and his wife?"

"Ef Hank hes gut ther Jim-Jams, an' ther ole 'ooman hes gone plum crazy, they air es safe with ther 'Paches es they would be in ther Nugget; an' a heap safer, fur es Hank air consarned, fer he can't pour down p'ison while El Orso hes him."

The entire party now entered the wide, moonlit canyon, where they were soon brought to a halt by a most thrilling scene.

Warnitta, the Wild, sat her steed, just above the land-slide, where the canyon made an abrupt bend; and in this bend, between it and the slide, was a mounted Apache brave, who had evidently been sent back to ascertain what had become of El Ropa, and if enemies were on the trail.

"Ef ther wild 'ooman ain't gut a 'Pache kerral'd, I hopes ter be nibbled ter death by dipper ducks!"

Such was the exclamation of Giant George while they all sat motionless on their horses during the brief but terrible scene that followed; for it was of course impossible to render any assistance to Warnitta, her movements being so rapid that a conflict between her and the Indian could not be prevented. The Apache sat his horse as if appalled at the sight of the strange being who confronted him; but, as she drew her knife, with a taunting yell, and flourished the glittering steel in circles about her head, he realized that she was not only human, but that he must fight for his life, his gaze being so steadily fastened upon her that he saw none of the party below.

Then came a grand but terrible sight! The mustang of Warnitta seemed to become doubly frenzied, as he was urged forward by his crazed mistress; and opening his mouth, and with outstretched neck, he rushed at terrific speed upon the Apache. Then, as he came within striking distance, he closed his teeth about the neck muscles of the Indian's pony, and throwing out his fore-hoofs quick as flashes of light, broke the legs of the animal, as though they had been pipe-stems. The mustang of the brave went down with a shriek that was almost human; and Warnitta, springing to a standing in her saddle, placed her left foot between the ears of her maddened steed, and bounded, with blazing eyes and uplifted knife, directly upon the Apache warrior, who, filled with terror though he was, closed with his strange antagonist, insane desperation nerving his arm.

The next instant both were rolling over and over on the rocky bed of the basin in a most terrible death-struggle, the blood spurting up through the moonlight, and plainly seen by the startled observers, who knew not from whom the sanguine current proceeded, or how it was to end.

A rolling mass of rags, feathers, hair and flesh, the white bars of gypsum on the warrior's face and breast being now and then discernible; and then it ceased, as Warnitta, the Wild, sat upright across the prostrate body of her foe, while up in the bright moonlight arose the blood-stained knife, and then down, again and again, through flesh and bone and spurting blood, while not ten paces away, up and down reared her mad mustang, throwing his hoofs through the air upon the Apache pony, which lay, gasping out its life, with glazing and appealing eyes, as the pitiless hoofs of its frenzied antagonist crashed through its ribs.

CHAPTER XII. TO THE RESCUE.

As El Orso and his braves, fresh from the torture of poor Terrif, galloped from the gulch into the basin, Lena Reynolds sat in the same position that we have described, on the border of the mesquites, and Warnitta crawled away into the bushes.

There she sat in the moonlight, and the spy who had been set to watch her stole down into the canyon and reported to his chief that she had not once changed her position since she had been in the canyon, although the way of escape was open.

"Waugh!" burst from El Orso. "Santissima Blanco big medicine—heap. Her face is white as the frozen rain that falls on the top of Sierra Madre, but she goes not to her people down the canyons. She stays with the Apaches, when the trail is open for her to go. She is from *El Dios Grande*, and knows all things. She had never seen El Orso, but she knew him and called his name. It is enough. She is big medicine. My braves must not hold their knives in her face. She can come and go like the deer of the mountains. El Orso has spoken, and his words are not like the song of a bird. Come! Our squaws have not looked in our eyes for two moons, and their eyes are weary. Vamonos!"

Up the canyon went the main portion of the war-party like the rush of a tornado, their black eyes flashing as they thought of the tortures they had inflicted upon a bated white man, their hands now stained with his blood.

In the rear went a dozen braves, acting as guard over Hank and Marm Holbrook, the former stupid with drink, the latter paralyzed with fright, both securely bound to mustangs.

while ambling in the rear of all, having seemingly been abandoned as useless, was Don Diablo, his head drooping downward, his eyes half-closed, his long ears flopping up and down in unison with his step. But no sooner did the burro observe Lena Reynolds than he walked up to within two feet of her, and laid his nose against her shoulder.

"Poor old Don!" exclaimed Lena, with deep feeling. "We are fated, it seems, to be together in strange and bloody scenes. The red fiends have cast you loose, and I will take advantage of it. You may again be the instrument of saving human life. At all events, it is one more hope."

Quickly drawing paper and pencil from the little sachet at her belt, she wrote hastily, folded the note, and bound it to a fore-leg of the burro; then, patting the beast on the head, she turned it toward the canyon, and said:

"Go, Don Diablo! Go to Giant George!"

Stupid though the brute appeared to be, he started off on the instant, ambling down the canyon; but, detecting the approach of the "citz," he went into a thicket, where sleep for a time overcame him, but the message, as we have seen, was, notwithstanding this, delivered in good time.

As soon as Lena had started Don Diablo down the canyon, she mounted her horse, and galloped west, soon joining the guard with the prisoners, who looked one at the other in amazement, as she rode up, her pale face turned toward the moon, while a low musical chant fell from her lips, impressive, as she meant it to be, to her hearers. After a ride of half an hour, through winding canyon, gulch and wash-out, the village was reached. A score of miserable lodges of buffalo hide, stood in a crescent curve amid the foot-bills; a dense cedar brake being behind them, and a clear, smooth, grass grown opening in front which stretched for more than a rifle-shot to another brake of cedars.

Over this open space were staked two score or more of hardy mustangs, which had been employed in drawing the cooking utensils and food from the permanent village.

The papposes had been left behind, in care of the old hags, and none but young middle-aged squaws were within the encampment. These were all armed with bows, arrows, and knives, and as ready to fight as their lords.

El Orso and his warriors rode around one of the foot-bills at full gallop, and making the air resound with their exultant whoops, while the squaws flocked into the middle of the crescent to receive and welcome them.

Then came the enumeration of those who had been killed, which was followed by terrific howls, from the friends of the slain.

The squaw of Red Hand, in particular, was furious; and, as El Orso threw her the scalp of poor Terrif, she tore it savagely with her teeth, spat upon it, and rolled upon the sward in a passion of rage and grief. The words of the Apache chief seemed to quiet her but little.

"The spirits of Red Hand's fathers have whispered in his ear. They have called him where grass is ever green, and rivers never run dry. Where game is on every bill, and horses are fleet as the wind. Red Hand knows that he has been avenged. He knows that the scalp of a white foe has been taken to his squaw. He knows that his death song will be chanted by many braves. It is well."

Thus spoke El Orso, and then Red Hand's squaw rushed off wildly, and still with frantic howls, to her lodge.

One lodge was much larger than the others, and to this the Apache chief repaired. A squaw stood guarding the entrance.

"It is well," he said. "El Orso knows that the squaw of Santa Rita is here. His heart is glad. Her cheek is like the sky when the sun sinks into the prairie at night. Her hands are white as the frozen rain that falls in the hunting-grounds of the Sioux. El Orso has spoken. He will talk now to the Rose of Santa Rita."

The squaw said not a word, but her eyes blazed with jealous fury as the chief passed within the lodge.

A pine knot was stuck in the earth, and by its light El Orso could see a young and beautiful girl who lay fast asleep upon a couch of buffalo robes. Her cheeks were pale, and traces of tears were plainly to be seen. She could not have been more than fifteen, but was fully developed, and her long hair was black and glossy as a raven's wing. With a guttural grunt of vexation, the Apache chief left the lodge, merely saying to the squaw at the entrance:

"Rose of Santa Rita sleeps. El Orso will come again."

As the chief came out, the encampment rung

with exultant whoops, for the captives had now been brought into the village; but as Lena Reynolds galloped into view, with her pale face and midnight garb, all became at once hushed as death.

She rode directly to the chief's lodge, dismounted, and walked directly past the squaw who guarded the entrance, the latter hurriedly darting to one side in superstitious awe.

Lena had cast glances here and there, as she rode into the village, and observing the large lodge, in front of which a squaw seemed to be posted as guard, she at once decided that some captive was inside, in all probability, Marietta, the child of the half-demented woman who had crawled amid the mesquites to speak with her. As Lena entered the lodge, she knew that the same Marietta, spoken of by her strange visitor in the canyon, was before her, and her heart at once went out to the beautiful sleeper, resolving to protect and save her, even though her own life should pay the forfeit.

She perceived that the poor girl was as pale almost as herself, and that anguish of mind, horror and home-sickness had brought her to death's door. She was, it was evident, a daughter of some Castilian of high birth, education, and wealth. Not all of this was surmise. The talk of the mother, and the side glimpse which Lena had gotten of the latter, proved it. She had seen that the apparel of Warnitta, though torn to rags, was of the finest silk; and the face of Marietta spoke of refinement and intelligence.

Not wishing to awaken the poor girl, who evidently slept the sleep of exhaustion, and recalling the fact that Marm Holbrook and Hank stood in need of her attention, Lena turned from her with reluctance, and withdrew from the lodge.

The prisoners were now being brought within the crescent, and El Orso stood ready to superintend the securing of them for the night, while a score or more of hideous squaws kept clamoring for their blood. These were ordered to stand aside, and several of the braves proceeded to cut the bonds that held Hank and his spouse to their saddles.

No sooner were the cords severed that bound Hank, than he fell to the earth, causing much merriment among the squaws; but this was speedily changed to surprise and fright, for as Hank struck the ground, the shock brought him back to life, and misery, and madness—in fact, the "jim-jams," so long deferred, had now possession of him.

His hands were still tied fast, but he rolled over, and at length got himself into a sitting posture; then his bloodshot eyes snapped and glared with fury.

He probably saw the painted fiends dancing around him, and other terrible shapes which came up before his disordered vision, menaced him on all sides. Gnashing his teeth, he rolled over and over on the sward, stood upon his head, tore up the grass, and darted here and there with a velocity never before witnessed by his appalled observers.

At an order from El Orso, half-a-dozen braves strove to bind him; but, with the strength of mania, he hurled them, strong men though they were, to the earth like so many straws.

Marm Holbrook, seeing that there was no immediate danger to herself, gradually lost sight of all else in her anxiety for Hank, and sat up, though in a state of great disorder.

"Thar ye go, Hank! Thar ye go ag'in! I tolle yer that ye'd go up ther spout ther nex' time whisk' gut ther best of yer. Ef yer hed only listened ter me, an' gone back Texas-way, we mought 'a' bin doin' well, an' gut el'ar' way from Tom Jones an' the rest o' them no 'count 'citz.' May ther Lord fergive yer, fer I can't! Yer hes put a heap o' trouble on my head, es well es yer own. Arter that las' scrape with ther wolf, in that jamboree in ther canyon, yer swored yer'd never lift another glass ter yer lips, an' yer war drunk es a fiddler nex' night. Hank, look out, ole man, er yer'll broke yer neck, an' then ther Nugget's gone up dead sure; fer I can't run no more'n ther kitchen an' ther bestest room. That makes me think o' ther 'Angel.' Everythin' bes gone wrong, since she levanted, an' tuck Giant George and Don Diablo. I hed a dream last night. Air yer listenin', Hank? Plagued ef I b'lieve yer c'u'd hear hit thunder ef yer war up in a berloon! Keep still a minit, dog-gone yer! I thought that ther 'Angel,' an' George, an' her burro all kin back, an' that ther boys run ther hull bizness inter ther canyon. Then I dreamed that ther Nugget gut sot on fire, an' Sardine-Box City war clean bu'sted up, es hit would 'a' bin, sure an' sartin."

"Hank, yer a-hevin' a boss circus all ter yerself, with 'bout a dozen side shows counted in; but yer hes whooped up a dog-goned peculiar audjince. Bless my soul! Whar am I, an' who air them hellyuns? Oh, good Lord protect me! I hes allus bin a meetin'-house woman, when thar was any ter go ter, an' hyer I am with my hands tied among a passel o' red Injuns! Oh-h-h, my Lord! I'm e'na'most crazy, an' hit hain't no wonder!

"Hank! yer dog-goned fool; I believe yer jist a-puttin' on half them didoes, thinkin' somebody'll shake yer up another drink. But, oh Lordy! What need I keer? Only ef I gits outen hyer, I'll find out who hoved me inter that 'hearse'; an' I swan he sha'n't never hev a smell o' whisk' et ther Nugget while I'm boss thar. But hyer I am a-runnin' on like this, when I orter be prayin'. I'm gittin' desp'rit, that's ther fact o' ther biz; an' I'd like ter brush my ha'r, an' hit's ondecent ter hev my clo'es mussed up this-a-way. Mr. 'Pache, ef yer'll only cut these strings offen my wrists, I'll see that yer hes free whisk' ter ther Nugget, arter ther Gov'ment civerlizes yer, an' runs yer back ter ther reservashe, 'lessen they shoots yer fust!"

Catching sight of Lena Reynolds, who had lowered her vail to escape being recognized by her, Marm Holbrook addressed her:

"Say ye-ou! Who air yer that tramps 'roun' a 'Pache camp with white woman's dry-goods on? I knows yer face air white, but whar did yer come from, an' what yer doin' with these red hellyuns? Come an' cut me loose! I won't levant, I tell yer; I'll squat hyer jist ther same."

Lena resolved again to try her power. The Indians, both male and female, were standing amazed at the antics of Hank, which were still going on without the least sign of abatement, when Lena strode up to the chief, saying:

"El Orso will give Santissima Blanco his knife. She will cut the strings that bind the white squaw. *El Dios Grande* has laid his hand on their heads. If El Orso does them harm, his corn will dry up, the rain will not fall, and sickness and death will come upon his tribe."

Without a word, the Apache chief passed her his knife, and walking behind Marm Holbrook, Lena Reynolds deliberately severed her bonds, and at once turned away.

With a heartfelt "God bless yer!" the landlady of the Nugget Hotel sprung to her feet, and began rubbing her wrists, about each of which was a livid ring. She then shook out her scanty skirts, and endeavored to smooth them, and to arrange her hair as well as she could under such unfavorable circumstances. Then, as she again seated herself on the sward, she looked toward her liberator.

"'Pears ter me," she said, "yer must be some relation ter ther 'Ang'l.' Yer favors her a heap!"

The Apaches were evidently convinced, by this time, that they had secured a very strange and most remarkable set of captives, and were at a loss what to think in regard to them. However, they knew that it was impossible for them to escape, and El Orso made up his mind to hold a council on the morrow, and then and there to determine what was to be done in regard to them.

Santissima Blanco, as a matter of course, must go to their distant village, and there become associated with their medicine-man. As for Hank, he could not be disposed of by torture, as he was evidently insane.

While things were in this situation in the Apache camp, Don Diablo came ambling slowly around a foot-hill, in his usual listless attitude and manner, and walked deliberately up to the assemblage. Lena Reynolds saw him, and thinking it possible that he bore a message from Giant George, and fearing that the keen-eyed Indians would see the buckskin band upon his leg if he came to a halt near her, as he probably would, she slowly, and without any apparent aim, wandered here and there for some minutes about the opening, and eventually entered the lodge of the chief, where Marietta still lay asleep.

The braves, however, took no notice of Don Diablo, their whole attention being centered upon the strange and terrible contortions and convulsions of poor Hank.

The burro went coolly on, following Lena up to the big lodge, and passed in as though he had always lived there, poking the flap to one side with his nose as he entered, the Squaw, on guard, standing to one side, in her awe and amazement at seeing the woman in black, with the snow-white face, once more take possession.

"Thar's ther burro ag'in!" exclaimed Marm Holbrook, as she caught sight of Don. "They say ther critter hes es much sehse some ways as a human. Ef he hain't gut more inter his brain-pan nor some what I knows, dang'd ef I don't think George hed orter killed him 'fore he was growed up!"

"Bless me! Thar I is a-sw'arin'; an' I can't 'void hit, though I ortn't ter go ter do it no times, an' 'speshly when I'm li'ble ter git my back ha'r tored down an' tuck off, skin and all, any minit. Thar goes ther Hank ag'in."

Little did the Apaches think that below in the foot-hills, not half a mile away, a score of desperate and determined white men were approaching, filled with hatred the most intense and a burning thirst for revenge. Led, too, by a woman, so wild and unearthly in appearance that they would have deemed their singular captives as naught, in the way of awakening their superstitious fears, in comparison with her.

First came Warnitta, the Wild, now calm and cunning, but still showing in her eyes a perfect volcano of madness, ready at any moment to burst forth. Then came Giant George, Arizona Jack and Tom Jones, riding abreast, and followed by the "citz," all with weapons firmly clutched, ready to drive spurs at a moment's notice, but yet moving quietly and with the utmost caution, in order that they might, if possible, steal in and rescue the captives before the latter could be murdered by the Apaches, as they most certainly would be upon the first alarm—the safety of the poor unfortunates depending entirely, under Providence, upon the secrecy of the approach of their rescuers and avengers.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAVED!

WHEN Lena re-entered the lodge, she saw that Marietta was still sleeping, and she stood but a moment watching her, when Don Diablo brushed through the folds of the buffalo-skin at the entrance.

Hastily stooping, she severed the buckskin that was about the burro's leg, at the same time speaking low words of praise, which the animal seemed to appreciate.

Opening the note, which to her great joy she found, Lena read:

"DEAD MAN'S GULCH.

"To MRS. REYNOLDS, (THE ANGEL OF THE PINALENO RANGE):

"At the request of our mutual friend, Giant George, I write these lines. I am yours devotedly, though we have never met. We are on the march up the range—a score of good men and true—and intend to steal into the camp, and save you and the others, or die in the attempt. Place not too much confidence in the power you have established over the Indians, for Giant George says they would murder you, upon the first alarm. The squaws are most to be feared, as they are jealous fiends, and their jealousy overrules their superstition. Pray for our success, for sure it is that a most terrible death overhangs you, and but the slightest veil intervenes between torture and safety. We are few in numbers, but we hesitate not. Your friend to the death,

"JOHN BURKE, alias ARIZONA JACK."

No sooner had Lena perused this letter, than she made up her mind to prompt action. She felt that she had been trusting too much to her power, and that she stood upon a volcano which, at any moment, might burst into an eruption of blood. First, she would awaken the sleeping Marietta.

"Make no outcry," she said, as the startled girl sprung up in alarm; "I have seen your mother in the mountains. She is searching for you, and I am about to make an attempt to save you. Obey me in everything, or we are lost. Come! I will pull up a pin at the back of the lodge, and we can spring into the cedars unobserved."

Suiting the action to the word, Lena removed the pin, and the captive maiden, trembling and pale, with the whispered "Gracias a Dios" upon her lips, passed out, and she followed her, both bounding into the cedars, and leaving Don Diablo standing in the lodge of the chief, its sole occupant.

Hand in hand, Lena and Marietta tore through the thicket in the direction of the range, dreading each moment to hear the wild death-pregnant cries of pursuit from the savages.

El Orso had seen the burro pass into the lodge, and knowing that the woman in black had also entered, he followed suspiciously, but not till some little time had elapsed.

Brushing past the squaw, the Apache chief strode in.

He gazed for a moment in astonishment, for the pin had been replaced by Lena, and there

was no visible outlet to the lodge except the one by which he had just entered; yet there was no being within that had life, except Don Diablo.

El Orso was at first convinced that Santissima Blanco had flown from the smoke hole in the top of the lodge skyward, taking the Rose of Santa Rita with her in her flight.

His fury at his loss was subdued by the awe which he felt. He grasped the torch from the earth, and held it aloft.

"Waugh!"

This ejaculation sprung to his lips, as he saw that a corner of one of the robes was disarranged. He went forward with his torch, and examined the earth, thus discovering that the pin had been recently drawn and replaced. Then he arose, his painted face contorted with the most devilish rage, his brutal lips curling away from his teeth, his black snake-like eyes glaring like those of a wild beast suddenly brought to bay.

Springing through the entrance, and drawing his scalping-knife, he made one quick slash at the squaw who was guarding the lodge, laying her body open to the vitals from breast to thigh, and causing the poor wretch's intestines to protrude. Then grasping her head with both his hands, he forced out her tongue as far as it was possible, slashed it off, and threw it to the dogs!

Catching up a jaw-strap from the earth, and springing through the assembled braves and squaws, whose backs had been turned toward the lodge, and who consequently had not witnessed the terrible deed, he ordered one of the warriors to follow him. Quickly adjusting the strap, he mounted his horse, the brave following his example.

Santissima Blanco and the Rose of Santa Rita have left the lodge of El Orso. Come! Let Coyote keep his tongue in his mouth. We will find the white squaws, and they shall die at the torture stake. The words of Santissima Blanco were false. She came not from *El Dios Grande*. She shall die. We want not braves to help find two squaws. *Vamonos!*"

With this explanation, the chief dashed past his lodge into the cedar thicket, in search of the two frightened females, who were now struggling toward the range, each step praying for strength to make their escape.

As El Orso and Coyote disappeared among the cedars, the startled Apaches, whose eyes had been following them, saw the tottering form of the dying squaw approaching them. It was only for a moment. The next, she fell, with guttural, blood-smothered sounds issuing from her throat. Filled with wonder the Apaches now rushed toward the lodge of their chief. None could account for the murder of the squaw. There had been no outcry heard, except that made by Marm Holbrook, as Hank made some unusually violent contortion.

While they gazed, the sound of steeds, galloping toward the opening, struck their ears, and all caught up their bows, arrows, and rifles, and whirled about in their tracks.

But the movement was too late, for as they turned, a dozen deadly steel tubes met their view, belching forth fire on the instant, and sending a hurtling rain of lead into their massed ranks, causing many, with wild death-yells, and arms thrown about their heads in agony, to reel and fall to earth, without even sounding a war-cry.

The Apache village was now a vocal pandemonium. Howls, shrieks, and groans were heard, while deadly feathered shafts flew from their bows in every direction, mingled with leaden hail. The "citz" were again on fire.

Marm Holbrook, as she cried out, "Bless my soul, and thank the Lordy!" was jerked from the earth, much to the disarrangement of wardrobe and hair, by Tom Jones. Hank was bound hand and foot in a trice, and pulled over the saddle-horn by one of the "citz," when all dashed around between the foot-hills; soon, however, returning in full view of the demoralized Indians, and drawing up in line to the north side of the opening.

A yell from the south caused the bewildered Apaches to look in that direction, when they saw that another line, of half a score of desperate whites, was drawn up, and ready.

Then they began to realize that they were corralled. To the west of them, beyond the narrow belt of cedars, rose an abrupt cliff which prevented escape in that quarter; while in their front, across the open space which was scattered over with their ponies, and exposed to the fire of both lines of whites, was another abrupt elevation.

Clearly there was no escape, and they drew

back into the crescent of lodges for council, filled with indignant wonder at the absence of their chief at such a critical time, and also with apprehension, at the warlike array of whites on both sides of them, with their rifles gripped in their hands.

In neither of the parties of whites, however, was Giant George, Arizona Jack, or Warnitta, the Wild; for, just before reaching the Apache village they had discovered two female figures, seemingly flying for life, and as they scanned them closely, they recognized Lena Reynolds. At the same instant Warnitta cried out, with a wail of anguish:

"Marietta! My child! My long-lost child, Marietta!"

Then, in a frenzy, and drawing her long stiletto, as El Orso and Coyote next came into view, she dashed off in pursuit. The mustang of Warnitta seemed to become maddened even as its mistress, to have its passion swayed by hers; for, with wild flowing mane and blazing eyes, it sped on in the direction of the fugitives.

"Jack, come with me!" called out Giant George. "Put fer ther camp o' ther bellyuns, boyees. We'll jine yer 'fore long. Hit's death, er ther 'Ang'l' with us, this hitch!"

As he said this, the burly scout set his teeth, and drove spurs to his horse, which with a snort sprung frantically after Warnitta. Arizona Jack followed close, both with their belt weapons pulled around in front, and their rifles slung on their saddle-horns, in order that they might not be inconvenienced in the race on which so much depended.

On, with trembling steps and tottering forms went Lena Reynolds and Marietta, the Rose of Santa Rita!

On, crashing through the cedars, flew El Orso and Coyote, the eyes of both fixed upon their intended victims.

On, on, like arrows shot from bows, swept the giant scout, with Jack and Warnitta, the Wild; on, over each and every obstruction, knowing that life and death hung upon an instant of time. As Warnitta appeared when dashing upon the Apache in the canyon, so she appeared now; and the same with her frightfully vicious steed.

And now, out upon the night air, burst shriek on shriek, as Lena and Marietta found themselves upon the brink of a bend in the canyon, its bed being a hundred feet below its sides, far down a deep chasm, only the further side of which was lit up by the moon, while close on their trail, flying like a tornado, came the two paint-daubed fiends in pursuit!

An exultant yell from the Apaches, as they took in the situation, now reached the two hunted, hopeless ones, and they fell upon their knees, the hands of one clasping those of the other, as they felt that their efforts had been in vain.

As the shrieks of the hapless women pierced the air, a scream, loud and prolonged like that of a panther, fell on the ears of El Orso, and, turning quickly, he discovered his pursuers. There were but three of them, and could he but decoy them into his camp, his braves and squaws, by having these captives to torture, would overlook his infatuation for the Castilian girl. They should be burned at the stake, and Santissima Blanco, if she did not prove conclusively that she was "big medicine," would suffer also.

Having thus settled it to his satisfaction, he shouted:

"Coyote will take Santissima Blanco! El Orso will take the Rose of Santa Rita! We will lead the white dogs, who will follow into our camp. Then the torture-stakes shall be red with their blood. Come!"

On thundered the red devils, and a moment after El Orso had yelled his order to Coyote, the horses of both were brought to a halt each side of the kneeling women.

Red hands instantly grasped the trembling arms of the now hopeless ones, and they were at once drawn up and clutched firmly to the paint-daubed breasts of their merciless captors. Then the snorting steeds were headed on the back trail. Flying like the wind, they dashed along the northern edge of the canyon, which wound round in a westerly curve, and they just escaped being cut off by Warnitta, whose mad mustang seemed as eager as his mistress.

With a scream of baffled rage, as she saw her child in those savage arms, Warnitta turned in chase.

Giant George and Arizona Jack, now becoming aware of the position of the canyon, guided their horses more to the west, hoping to intercept the red fiends, who now sent out yells of exultation over their success.

El Orso was in the lead, but cunning as he was, he had not taken into consideration the fact that the horses, both of Coyote and himself, being double laden, could not keep up the speed they had so far maintained. Their pursuers, however, instantly perceived this advantage in their favor, and urged their steeds without mercy, fearing that if they did not at once close with the Apache, the latter would either stab their captives or be able to take refuge in the gap, for, as a matter of course, they were not aware of the manner in which the "citz" had corralled the Indians, or the nature of the ground where the lodges were pitched.

Coyote, having the best horse, darted ahead, and El Orso holding the jaw strap in the same hand that clasped Marietta—both captives had fainted from fright—lashed his mustang with all the strength of his powerful arm; but it was no use, for the avengers were upon him.

Warnitta, the Wild, shot up on his right, her mad steed with its mouth wide open, aiming to clasp its terrible jaws upon the neck of the mustang of the chief.

The mother, maddened again, this time by the sight of the death-pale face of her child, with knife in hand, hair flying, and a murderous light in her eyes, made ready to spring upon El Orso, regardless of consequences.

But Arizona Jack was, as usual, on hand. Driving his spurs into the bleeding flanks of his horse, he came crashing, at break-neck speed, to save the poor girl.

As the head of the wild mustang pressed along past the leg of the Apache chief, he drew his long scalping-knife and with the velocity of thought, raised the glittering steel, nerving his sinewy arm to plunge the weapon into the breast of the unconscious maiden.

But his arm was stayed as his eye caught sight of the maddened woman, so unearthly in appearance, so terrible in her tiger-like thirst for his blood. At the instant that El Orso was thus paralyzed with the sight before him, Arizona Jack plunged alongside on his left, and with the quickness of a flash of light, and the strength of a giant, born of his deep concern for the fair girl, he tore her from the arms of the Apache chief, and the Rose of Santa Rita was saved!

Then followed the most terrible scene of this tragic drama.

The mustang of El Orso, no longer urged on by its appalled master, slacked its speed, panting with over-exertion, and that moment the jaws of the wild, frenzied steed of Warnitta closed upon its neck, as it reared upon its hind legs, and shot out its terrible hoofs, treading about and facing its victim, while it tore the flesh from the bones of the doomed animal, which sunk to its knees with a shriek of fright and agony.

Then it was that Warnitta sprung like a panther over the head of her terrible mustang, and directly upon the Apache chief. Both rolled over and over, in deadly conflict; Warnitta, in her insane rage, overcoming El Orso, and plunging her stiletto through and through his vitals, the death-yell of the fierce Apache chief sounding afar, his glazing eyes filled with all the superstitious terror of his race, as the human tigress spat in his face and screamed in his ears, until the death-rattle sounded in his throat.

While this tragic scene was transpiring, and Jack was seated upon the ground, striving with his canteen of water to revive the Rose of Santa Rita, still another tragedy was being enacted but two rifle-shots away.

As Coyote dashed ahead with Lena Reynolds in his arms, his whole attention directed upon urging his horse to greater speed, Giant George was on his track; grand, magnificent in his every move, poise of form and glance of eye, as he sped like the wind to the rescue of one whom he idolized, and for whom he would willingly die.

There was a nobleness in his insane concern, a kingliness in this border hero, which was now brought to the front, and which would have commanded the admiration of even a fool, a dolt, and caused him for once, through the influence of that admiration, to be an intelligent man.

As it was, with such an incentive to valor and skill ahead of him, the giant scout was invincible; and, with bowie held tightly in his hand, he ranged along the left side of Coyote's horse, the brave being unaware of his close proximity, until his foe was literally upon him.

Now followed a crashing, sickening sound, as the bowie of Giant George clove the skull of the Indian, and then another; a yell, mingled with the grating of steel against bone, and

Coyote and his horse together sunk lifeless to the earth, the mustang with the knife still projecting from between the bones at the top of its head.

The wild cry of triumph from the scout brought his horse to a sudden halt; and the next moment Giant George held fast, clasped in his strong arms, the black-robed, pale-faced, senseless woman, to whom so much was owed, and for whom so much had been risked—"The Angel of the Pinaleno Range!"

CHAPTER XIV.

APACHES ON THE HALF-SHELL.

As has been stated, a line of "citz" to the north, and south of the opening, effectually corralled the Apaches in their temporary village; and Tom Jones dared not take the responsibility of ordering a charge for the reason that the Indians, without counting the squaws, outnumbered his men two to one, and were, besides, many of them, armed with repeating rifles.

Tom and the "citz" were terribly exercised in their minds in regard to the safety of the "Ang'l," for the shrieks had been heard by them, and yet they dared not abandon their positions. They knew not the exact number of the Indians, and therefore were unable to decide how many Giant George, Jack and Warnitta had to contend against. For this reason they were on thorns, so to speak.

From the demoralization among the Apaches, Tom decided that El Orso must be absent, and that probably the chief was one of the pursuers of the escaped women.

However, they were not kept long in suspense. The giant scout and Arizona soon appeared, each having a woman before him on the saddle. A second glance showed that the female thus carried by George was dressed in black, and that her face was pale as death; but they recognized her from afar, felt that she was alive, and wild, ringing cheers burst from every throat for "ther Ang'l o' Penarlayno Range!"

Feeble as Lena was, she waved her hand at the "citz," which nerved them anew for the fight, and the scout and Jack passed on, with their fair burdens, to the retreat in which Hank and Marm Holbrook had been left.

The latter, who was now weeping for joy, and letting her tongue run on without mercy at Hank, who was seated at the foot of a boulder, now realizing, after a brief explanation from Giant George, that the woman in black was the "Ang'l," came near fainting for the third time. The poor woman's feelings may be imagined.

Leaving the released captives, the two men hastened to the scene of operations, and sending one of the "citz" thence to guard the women, made ready for the desperate fight.

Observing the return of the two whites with the captives, the Apaches decided that El Orso had been killed, and immediately the next in rank took command, ordering the squaws into the cedars, to make their escape, if need required, or an opportunity presented.

Previous to this, however, a quartering fire from the Winchester rifles of the "citz" caused a dozen death yells; and then, all the Apaches, rendered desperate by their position, ran in a scattering manner to the "open," and jerking up the stakes to which their mustangs were secured, sprung upon the steeds. Forming quickly in line, they made ready to break through the "citz" to the north, but their doom was sealed; for, as they started toward their enemies in front, a perfect hail of shots cut down men and horses from behind, and before they could recover, Giant George, Jack, Tom, and the "citz" in their front, were upon them like an avalanche, at a six-shooter charge.

At the same time, the "citz" in the rear galloped madly upon them, with wild yells. Then came the tug of war.

A rattling discharge of revolvers filled the air with smoke, and sulphurous smell, while the spot where the Apaches had drawn up in line, was one mad mass of struggling men and mustangs; the clash of knives in fierce combat, and the crashing of skulls beneath the blows of rifle-barrels, ringing amid cries of agony.

But this fierce fight could not last long. Soon all was over. The sounds of battle ceased and only the groans of the wounded and dying sounded on the morning air.

The gray streaks of dawn shot up above the serrated mountain-range, and the smoke arose from the scene of carnage, disclosing the mass of dead and dying.

The giant scout, with Arizona Jack, Tom Jones, and the surviving "citz," were gathered near; not a man of the number being free from wounds. Thus they stood, while afar up, on the

bluff, crouched nearly two-score of miserable squaws, who, as they crawled to a position from which they could view the late encampment, burst out in the most unearthly howls, that rung and echoed wildly from cleft to crag, in the rocky range!

Some half a dozen warriors escaped to the cedars, all more or less wounded, and joined the squaws; when, fearing pursuit, they all fled to the gulches, where they secreted themselves. Eager though the squaws were for fight, they knew that their bows and arrows could avail them little against the fast-shooting guns of the whites.

"Boyees," said Giant George, after he had got his breath, "we-uns has made ther rifle. Hit war desp'rit, though; ormighty desp'rit fer a few fleetin' periods. Fact air, hit war ther toughest fight I has engineered in a heap o' moons. We has lost four of our boys, but we has wiped out El Orso's band purty slick and clean. Hit's wo'th more'n we kin count ter Arizone. Thar's nigh onter thirty-five o' ther dod-blasted painted pirates what we has civilized, an' what'll stay so. Arizone Jack, how does yer brace up? Does yer like ter civerlize 'Paches, er air yer wishin' yer war back Wil-minton-way with yer brother Tom?"

"Well, pard George, I am naturally a go-ahead kind of a fellow, and like excitement, but I must confess that I've had it piled on pretty thick, and would like time to breath between shots. Things are lively here, and I am favorably impressed with the white population of this section, but the number of wild folks rather sets me back. That reminds me; I wonder where Warnitta can be. I should suppose she would want to see her child, so recently saved from a terrible fate."

"She's a rip-staver," said George. "She's a rambunctious tearer, she air. But she wouldn't know her darter from a buffler calf, if she see'd her, for I s'pect she's madder nor a rattler in dog-days. Howsoever, she's a human, an'a boss fighter, an' mebbe so she kin be fotched roun' ter squar' biz ag'in. Her thinkin' mer-chein air all out o' gear. Boyees, kinder herd up ther plunder, an' I'll go fer ter find ther wild woman. Tom Jones, what's up? Yer 'pears down in ther mouth. Come on, Jack! We'll go an' hunt up ther wild woman an' her condemned cuss of a hoss."

At the scene of the race for the captives, the scout and Jack discovered the vicious mustang, standing at the point where El Orso had been hurled from his wounded steed. Near him, and with her head pillow'd upon the horse of El Orso, lay Warnitta, apparently asleep. Her hands were covered with gore, as was her ragged clothing; in one she still clutched her bloody knife, and in the other—

"What on earth is it?" asked Arizona Jack.

"Ef hit ain't El Orso's heart, I'll eat bugs fer grub fer ther nex' six moons! See whar she cut hit out. She's kep' her affidavy, dang'd ef she hain't!"

"Is she dead or asleep, think you?"

"She's a-sleepin' like a suckin' baby, an' I'm a-bettin' she'll wake up straight an' squar'; but she'll hev ter soak herself in ther canyon 'bout half a moon, an' put on diff'runt togs, 'fore she kin 'sociate with civerlized folkses like ther Bald Eagle o' ther Rockies."

"Shall I awaken her, pard George?"

"Reckon we'd orter. Some skulkin' red might glide this way."

Jack placed his hand upon the shoulder of the sleeping woman, but sprung quickly away from her, for the mad mustang bounded toward him with open mouth.

"Dang the cantankerous cuss of a critter!" cried out the scout; "I b'lieve I'll hev ter put 'beut a ounce o' lead inter hits brain-box. Hit's ther bestest thing ter be did."

"No, pard George," interposed Jack, "don't shoot the nag, for it has been the means of doing much good in last night's performance—in fact, it saved the girl's life."

"Waal, jest es yer say, Jack. Listen! I'll whoop her up." And Giant George gave a piercing yell.

Slowly the eyes of Warnitta, the Wild, opened, and she arose to a sitting posture, gazing around her in utter bewilderment. Then, gradually, the scenes of the terrible night began to return to her, and she cried out as she looked around, piteously and pleadingly, yet hesitatingly, as if she feared an answer that would crush her brain:

"Marietta, my child! Where is my Marietta?"

"She is safe, and is waiting to see you," said Jack, pointing as he spoke toward the southeast.

Throwing the heart of El Orso from her, with

a look of horror and disgust, Warnitta, who now had the appearance of an entirely different woman from what they had seen of her, sprung upon her strange steed and darted off toward the point designated by Jack.

" Didn't I tol' yer she'd be 'roun', straightan' mild, pard Jack? Reckon she'll pan out a heap o' sense within a few suns. Come; let's jine ther boyees, an' take a shake with ther Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range."

George and Jack galloped back toward the rescued captives, and the scene of the terrible fight, and found that the "citz" had buried their dead pards and heaped the buffalo skin lodges and useless camp tricks of the Apaches upon the slain savages.

As our friends rode into the open space, Tom Jones set fire to the pile, which blazed up wildly as he yelled:

" Hyer's yer baked 'Paches on ther half-shell, es ther boyees et ther Gulf says! Pard George, whar's Warnitta, ther Wild? This hyer sort o' a circus would jist make her hump herself, an' f'v 'roun' with pure satisfac'."

" She hes die-sected El Orso, tuck a see-ester on his mashed carkiss, an' then skuted off ter see her darter. I'm tol'able glad she ain't my marm. But ef she don't come 'roun' ter a squar' biz, she'll bu'st up Sardine-box City when she gits thar, with her dang'd onnat'ral crazy boss. Whar's Don Diablo? I wants ter bug ther cuss fer totin' ther 'Nited States mail. He tuck a heap o' trouble outen our brain-boxes, 'sides 'leavin' ther Angl's mind."

" Ther Don air dead broke down," said Tom. " Shovin' him through civerlize, an' fotchin' him back so onnat'ral like, then skutin' him 'roun' 'mong the prickly pears an' 'Paches, war too much fer him. Reckon his grub didn't 'gree with him, St.-Louis-way. He's billious, fer I hain't see'd him take a chaw o' nothin' sence he struck Arizone, though his common grub was scattered promiscu's-like in ther basin. I'll sw'ar he didn't pull greens in ther canyon; fer he run ther mail right through without stoppin' et ther stations fer 'freshments of no kind."

Giant George started off for the bowlder before Tom had ceased speaking, and the latter superintended the collecting of the ponies of the Apaches, and the packing of the same with robes, saddles, guns, and every article of useful plunder which could be gotten together in the desolated village.

CHAPTER XV. BUSINESS REVIVED.

THE reader is now invited to return with us to Sardine-box City, for the purpose of "corraling" within the precincts of semi-civilization our peculiar characters, the counterpart of each one of whom he may meet any day in whatever "one-horse" mining town of that section he may care to visit.

A long line of mounted men and women, and packed horses, are winding here and there among the bowlders and cedars. They reach the stage road, passing the spot where the "hearse," with its human occupants, not forgetting Don Diablo, were so unfortunately left by the "citz" when the shanties blazed.

Up toward us they ride—Giant George, by the side of the "Angel;" Arizona Jack with Marietta; next, and alone, Warnitta, the Wild, the long black vail of Lena Reynolds hiding her face and tangled hair, and proving that, with the recovery of her child, she has also recovered her senses, and is ashamed of her most forlorn condition.

And next come Marm Holbrook and poor Hank; the latter in his tattered rags, and covered with bruises and scratches.

" Bless my soul, an' thank ther Lordy!" cried out Marm Holbrook. " Ther Nugget's all hunk, an' Sardine-box City ain't bu'sted yit, by a jug-full. Hank, yer dog-goned ole fool! ef ther Angel wa'n't goin' ter locate hyar, I'd skute back Texas-ways afore night. Hit ain't fer a lone woman, clean out o' civilize, ter pretend ter know much 'bout hyerarter, but I 'member ther gospill-slingers used ter say, 'Hit's easier fer a buffler bull ter crawl through a button-hole, then fer a pilgrim ter smuggle hisself inter kingdom come when he's bilin' over wi' pison.' Hank, ye'd better slide out ter ther smoke-house when we arroves, an' crawl in an' make a hefty prayer, fer ef any pilgrim needs religion it's you. But I know yer goin' es straight es yer wabbly legs kin tote yer mean carkiss, ter thet bar, an' pour down 'bout a pint o' chain-lightnin.' Yer pervokes me, meetin'-house woman es I air, till I 'spectes I'll die in a crazy-house."

Behind this worthy pair of peculiars, came

Tom Jones, proud and consequential at being sheriff of the burg that had cleaned out the Panthers and the band of El Orso. He saw bright prospects ahead. The Angel was saved, and would locate in Sardine-box, and the city was bound to grow and be a success. He would go pards with Lena and Giant George in his mine, and it would no longer be the "Slip-up," but the "Angel." Arizona Jack, he had already decided to engage as assistant superintendent.

In a long line in the rear, came the "citz," leading the Apache mustangs, some of them heavily packed with plunder.

Much to Marm Holbrook's joy, she found her "best room" as she had left it. Descending the stairs to welcome Marietta and Warnitta the Wild, to the "Nugget," she spied her liege lord, back of the bar, gulping down at a single draught a full glass of undiluted whisky.

" Bless my soul! Hank Holbrook; ef yer can't settle down ter yer ole biz 'bout es speedy an' without sary-mony. I'm ther most beat woman in Arizone, but I swan I won't waste time a-talkin' ter yer, when that's better folkses a-waitin' ter be 'comerated. Drink yerself outen this dog-goned territory es quick es yer kin!"

Hank took no notice whatever of the "chin-music" of Marm Holbrook. He was used to it. So, swallowing another drink, and then tossing a spoonful of ground coffee into his mouth, he looked up with a contemptuous glance at the medallion likeness of Buffalo Bill, the eyes of which seemed to be filled with mirth, but who was now "nowhere" in Hank's estimation, compared with himself and his frontier experience.

" Dog-gone yer, Bill Cody!" he exclaimed, "I hes swallered more Injuns then yer ever see'd. I hes heerd that yer c'u'd pour down a heap o' terrantaler juice, but I'm a-layin' my pile flat that yer ain't nowhar 'long side o' Hank. 'Pears ter me," he added, reflectingly, "that I'm a leetle off my kerbase till yit, an' I'll take another snifter. I doesn't miss nothin' from abint ther bar, which proves that Bill Cody air a p'ison bad man; fer all yer hes gut ter do air ter hang his pictur' up, an' nary a pilgrim'll dar' touch anything."

Swallowing another drink, Hank rushed to the door.

" Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!" he yelled.

A roar of laughter greeted the landlord's effort.

Marm Holbrook conducted Lena to her room, and some of the "citz" ran to the stables for her baggage.

The corpse of Red Hand was still nailed to the shanty, and Arizona Jack emptied his revolvers into it, by way of practice, vowing that he would "whoop her through or bu'st" on that line a little longer, with Giant George, before returning to the wilds of Wilmington.

On the next day, after all had recovered somewhat from their fatigue, the burg was aroused by Tom Jones, who came riding up at headlong speed, and yelling like a fiend. His hat was gone, his hair flying, and Giant George, who stood at the "Nugget" door, called out:

" Boyees, this air ther dog-gonedest burg fer crazy folkses I ever struck. Now, that's Tom Jones, what war never off his kerbase es I 'members, is es luny es Warnitta, the Wild, war. I've a purty good mind ter let fly with my six, an' spile a sheriff fer futur' biz. Jack, hes Warnitta 'roved 'round all squar' yit?"

" Yes, pard George; she's all right, and a noble-looking woman she is. She wants you and myself to act as guard and guide to the Santa Rita Ranch, near Tuscon, where her husband, now almost insane with grief, awaits some knowledge of his wife and child."

" I'll go within five miles o' ther ranch, Jack. Thet's es near es I keer ter glide ef ther ole man's luny; es I tol' yer, I've hed enough o' that."

Further conversation was interrupted by the return of Tom Jones. Back he came, his horse snorting and plunging at a furious rate. Up to the "Nugget" he dashed, sprung from his steed, grasped Giant George by the hand, gave it a hearty shake, then caught the hand of Arizona Jack, and next, bounding over the bar, dragged Hank outside into the street, where they clutched and rolled over in the dirt.

" What the deuce is the matter with Tom?" queried Jack.

" Dang'd ef I know! Is lunyness ketchin'?" " Reckon not," was the reply; " but it seems to be epidemic in this latitude."

" Bless my soul!" screamed Marm Holbrook, running from the kitchen. " Hes thet Hank

gut ther jim-jams ag'in? I swan I'll hev ter tie him up in ther smoke-house."

" Hank's all right," said Jack. " It's Tom Jones this time. Hes madder than a March-born hatter."

At this moment Tom sprung to his feet, raised the landlord also to the perpendicular, and pointing up the range gap where the stage road wound, he yelled:

" Take a squint up ther trail, Hank, dog-gone yer! What der yer see?"

As he spoke, a long line of heavy ox-wagons wound around the curve, and started down the decline.

" Wagins. Dod blast yer, Tom Jones! Ef yer don't loose yer grip, I swar I'll never shove yer another errigate!"

" Wagins! Dod blast yer, Hank; them is loaded with ther furnisses, quartz mill, an' mersheenery. Hurra-h-h-h fer ther Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range! Hurra-h-h-h fer everybody! Hold me, Giant George, er I swar I'll bu'st!"

" I'd ruther a dang'd sight see you bu'st then Sardine-box city!" exclaimed the burly scout, springing into the middle of the street, and firing in quick succession the twelve shots in his revolvers; but, before the last report echoed in the range, the "citz" broke loose, and once again Sardine-box city was in an uproar.

Lena Reynolds, dressed in a neat habit, with Marietta and Warnitta, the Wild, by her side, the latter now appearing like another woman, passed out into the street and welcomed the wagon-master, with his valuable freight, which had been ordered on the road long before the arrival of the benefactors of the burg.

But, in closing, we will say that Giant George and Arizona undertook to guard and guide Warnitta and her daughter Marietta to Tuscon; and we may, at some future day, give the details of a journey which was not devoid of perilous adventure.

As it is, we must bring our narrative to an end, at a time the most favorable for all concerned, when the long train of wagons containing the quartz mill and machinery for the Slip-up Mine fill the streets of Sardine-box City, and the "citz" are wild with joy, as the air rings with far-sounding cheers for

" Ther Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range."

THE END.

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